



# Harmful Algal Blooms: *Pets & Livestock*

## **What are harmful algal blooms?**

Cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae, are a natural part of lakes, rivers, and ponds. Unfortunately, some cyanobacteria can produce toxins, called cyanotoxins, that can make animals and people sick. When conditions are right, these organisms can increase rapidly to form cyanobacterial blooms—or Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs).

A HAB is most likely to occur when the water temperature is warm, calm, and has a high level of nutrients such as phosphorus or nitrogen. HABs, which can last several weeks, can look like scums in the water and may have small flecks, foams, or sometimes globs and mats floating in it. The water can also look like it has spilled paint or a green sheen on the surface.

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## **What should you do if you think you've found a HAB?**

You cannot tell if an algal bloom is harmful just by looking at it. If you see a possible harmful algal bloom, do not allow your pets or livestock to swim or drink water from the areas that could have HABs in them, including the shoreline where algae are present. If most of the water body appears to be affected, avoid it completely.

Always report suspicious looking algae to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) by calling 800-662-9278 or emailing [AlgaeBloom@michigan.gov](mailto:AlgaeBloom@michigan.gov). If you may have had contact with water containing cyanotoxins and become sick, talk to your doctor or call Poison Control at 800-222-1222.

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## **What are the health effects on pets and livestock?**

Symptoms of illness from cyanotoxins often appear quicker in animals than in people - sometimes minutes to a few hours. Symptoms in animals can include vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, staggered walking, excessive drooling, and convulsions. Because dogs can swallow cyanotoxins when they groom or lick themselves, it's important to rinse them off with water after contact with a possible HAB.

Contact a veterinarian immediately if pets or livestock have had contact with a HAB or are showing signs of illness. If you or your veterinarian think your pet or livestock is ill due to a HAB, report it to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development by completing and submitting a Reporting a Reportable Disease Form found at [www.michigan.gov/dvmresources](http://www.michigan.gov/dvmresources) under "Reportable Diseases." Submit the form and any questions to [mireportableanimal@michigan.gov](mailto:mireportableanimal@michigan.gov).



*More information on HABs can be found on  
EGLE's website at [www.Michigan.gov/EGLE](http://www.Michigan.gov/EGLE).*