

Harmful Algal Blooms and Pets: Know the Facts About Cyanobacteria



Pictured is a lake entirely covered by an algal bloom. As a good rule of thumb, “When in Doubt, Stay Out!”

Pets and Cyanobacteria

Recent news stories highlight the danger that Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) pose to people and pets. These blooms are caused by organisms known as cyanobacteria or blue-green algae. Algal blooms can deplete oxygen and block sunlight to other organisms, and some produce powerful toxins that can cause illness, and even death, to wildlife, livestock, pets, and people.

HABs are most common in the late summer in response to warm temperatures, sunlight, and elevated levels of nutrients. These blooms may look like a green scum, like paint floating on the surface, or the water may have an oily appearance on the surface or be entirely green. Some blooms are difficult to see and resemble pollen floating on the surface. The water may only look murky, or the bloom may float below the surface.



Since pets are smaller than humans, they are at a higher risk from contact with HABs and symptoms in pets will appear at much lower dosages. Pets are also more likely to ingest algae or toxins as they drink the water, which increases the rate at which toxins are absorbed by the body. For their safety, pets should not be allowed to swim in any water with signs of an algal bloom or drink any standing water.

Testing for Cyanobacteria and Toxins

Several common toxins are produced by various cyanobacteria species, but not every species produces every toxin, and there is no way to tell by looking at a bloom whether it is toxic. Some species only produce one specific toxin, and some produce

several different toxins, depending on environmental conditions.

EnviroScience provides a variety of [Harmful Algal Bloom services](#), including [toxicity testing](#) and [algal identification](#). EnviroScience usually recommends a “HAB screen” test for a pet owner who is concerned about their pet swimming in a home pond or lake. EnviroScience biologists will check your sample for any cyanobacterial species that can produce toxins. We provide you a report listing these species and any toxins that they can produce. EnviroScience staff can then recommend which, if any, of the toxins you should test for, based on which species are dominant in the sample.

For more information, contact us to discuss pricing and schedule a test using the form below.

Your Name (required)

Your Email (required)

Subject

Your Message