

# For Immediate Release

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## **Protect pets from elusive blue-green algae**

LAKE MILLS – Lurking beneath the surface of still water, a blue-green menace may be waiting to snare your dog – or you.

Dr. Stork of the Lake Mills Veterinary Clinic is concerned that dog owners may be unaware of the potential danger of blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, in our waterways this summer.

“With all the flooding this year, we’ve got standing water in places that are normally dry and a lot more water flushing nutrients into the waterways. This creates conditions that are ripe for algal blooms,” said Dr. Stork.

Blue-green algae can produce three types of toxins that attack the skin, mucus membranes, liver and nervous system.

One thirsty slurp may be all it takes. Drinking contaminated water, or licking his coat after swimming can expose your dog to the toxins.

Symptoms range from a rash and runny nose, to lethargy and loss of appetite, to vomiting, seizures, convulsions and paralysis. Without immediate medical attention, these toxins can kill your dog.

It can happen more rapidly than you might expect.

“At least one case has been reported of a dog swimming out, drinking contaminated water, and dying before he could swim back to shore,” said Dr. Stork.

If you suspect your dog might have been exposed, call your veterinarian immediately. On the way to the clinic, keep the dog as calm as possible and prevent convulsing/seizuring dogs from accidentally injuring themselves.

Although not all algal blooms are toxic, unfortunately there is no way to tell by looking at the water. In fact, some blooms sit below the surface instead of the classic ‘pond scum’ appearance, and at least one kind is not blue or green. Even water that has been treated may not be safe – cyanobacteria often produce toxins in response to chemical treatment.

Avoid standing water, lakes and ponds with a layer of scum floating on top, and streams that are draining from those types of water bodies.

Keep your dog safe from algal blooms by:

- preventing her from drinking from or swimming in lakes and ponds that may be experiencing a bloom, and streams coming from those water bodies, including keeping her on leash if necessary

- bringing water on walks and camping trips (boiling or filtering contaminated water will not get rid of the toxins)
- bathing your dog after he has been in a lake, pond or stream, and rinse the coat thoroughly to remove all contaminants.

Also, avoid watering your lawn with pond or lake water that looks or smells scummy. If your dog is water-crazy and you are suspicious of local lakes or ponds, try a kiddie pool for safe, backyard fun.

To learn more about blue-green algae or other pet health hazards, visit the Lake Mills Veterinary Clinic web site, [www.lakemillsvetclinic.com](http://www.lakemillsvetclinic.com).

FOR MORE INFORMATION or an interview, contact Dr. Stork, Lake Mills Veterinary Clinic, 920-648-2421.

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