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To: State of Wisconsin Veterinarians

From: Ashley Vickers
Epidemiologist
Harmful Algal Blooms Program

Upcoming Harmful Algal Bloom Season And Reporting Animal Illnesses

This memo brings attention to the upcoming harmful algal bloom (HAB) season and reminds Wisconsin veterinarians to report suspected HAB-related animal illnesses.

Reporting a HAB incident will trigger a multi-agency coordinated investigation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Harmful algal blooms are the rapid growth of algae or cyanobacteria in water that can harm people, animals, or the environment. Most cyanobacteria blooms usually occur in nutrient-rich lakes during warm, calm weather, beginning in spring and ending in late fall.

In 2025, DHS investigated seven animal illnesses related to HABs, including three suspected dog deaths, but illnesses related to HABs are largely under reported. Animals can be exposed through ingestion, skin or eye contact, and inhalation.

Diagnosis

There are no clinically available diagnostic tests for cyanotoxins. Diagnosis is often based on symptoms following exposure to contaminated water.

Treatment

Medical care is supportive, as there are no specific treatments or antidotes for cyanotoxin poisoning.

Symptoms

Symptoms vary depending on the toxin and exposure route, and can affect the skin, respiratory, gastrointestinal, and nervous systems and can include excess drooling, vomiting, malaise, seizures, behavior changes, and paralysis. Signs of illness can appear within minutes to hours after exposure.

Reporting

Please use one of the following options to report suspected HAB-related animal illnesses:

- Online: [Harmful Algae Bloom \(HAB\) Illness or Sighting Survey](#)
- Telephone: 608-266-1120
- Email: dhshabs@dhs.wisconsin.gov

For more information

DPH resource: [Algae: Cyanobacterial Harmful Algal Blooms](#)

CDC resource: [Harmful Algal Blooms and Your Health | Harmful Algal Bloom \(HAB\)-Associated Illness | CDC](#)

For additional information about this memo

Ashley Vickers

Email: Ashley.vickers@dhs.wisconsin.gov

Phone: 608-261-6866