



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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### **State Departments of Health and Agriculture issue blue-green algae advisory**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Animal Health Division, are advising the public to avoid contact with or swallowing blue-green algae, also known as cyanobacteria, and to protect their pets and livestock.

According to Dr. Susan Keller, state veterinarian, the advisory is to remind people that these blooms are most common in North Dakota in late summer, but it only takes a few hot days to cause the overwintering organisms to become active and bloom. Exposure can cause people and animals to become ill.

“Blue-green algae normally can be found in many lakes and pasture watering holes in the state,” Keller said. “Under certain conditions, the blue-green algae can grow into blooms and can produce toxins.”

According to the state health department, blue-green algae blooms can produce poisonous cyanotoxins. These toxins have no known antidotes. People, their livestock or other animals that swallow water containing a harmful algae bloom can become sick. Symptoms can include severe diarrhea and vomiting; numb lips, tingling fingers and toes, or dizziness; or rashes, hives or skin blisters. Children are at higher risk than adults for illness from harmful algae blooms because they weigh less and can get a relatively larger dose of toxin.

The Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture, Animal Health Division, recommend these steps to avoid exposure to cyanotoxins:

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*Visit the health department home page at [www.ndhealth.gov](http://www.ndhealth.gov).*

- Don't swim, water ski or boat in areas where the water is discolored or where you see foam, scum or mats of green or blue-green algae on the water.
- If you do accidentally swim in water that might have a cyanobacteria bloom, rinse off with fresh water as soon as possible.
- Don't let pets or livestock swim in or drink from areas where the water is discolored or where you see foam, scum or mats of algae on the water.
- If pets (especially dogs) swim in scummy water, rinse them off immediately – do not let them lick the algae (and toxins) off their fur.
- Don't irrigate lawns or golf courses with pond water that looks scummy or smells bad.
- Respect any advisories announced by public health authorities.

For more information about the effects of blue-green algae blooms on pets and livestock, contact the Animal Health Division, North Dakota Department of Agriculture at 701.328.2655. For more information on public health issues, contact Karl Rockeman, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5225.

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