



## The Dangers of Blue-Green Algae

Summer is in full swing and what better way to let your pet beat the heat than to let them go for a swim, right? However, some ponds and lakes can have an overgrowth of algae which can be very toxic to your pet and extreme caution should be taken before letting them dive in or drink from scummy waters.



Blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, is a microorganism that can live in fresh water such as ponds, lakes, and stream edges. During times of hot, wet, and humid conditions, such as what the Kansas City metro area is currently experiencing, the bacteria tend to grow in huge 'blooms' and cover the surface of the water.

While not all blue-green algae blooms produce toxins, some can and it's these types that can be fatal if not treated promptly. It's also impossible to tell by just looking at the pond scum which type is toxic so it's best to just avoid coming in contact with it all together. Below are the 2 most fatal types of toxins that can be produced by cyanobacteria:

### Microcystin toxicity:

- Liver failure
  - Signs: vomiting, diarrhea (bloody or tarry), pale mucus membranes, jaundice, salivation
  - Bloodwork: increased liver enzyme values, abnormal clot times, decreased glucose, and decreased protein values
  - Treatment: aggressive fluid and electrolyte therapy as soon as signs show up
  - *If treatment not started within 24 hours prognosis is very poor*



### Anatoxin toxicity:

- Neurologic disorders
  - Neurologic signs: seizures, disorientation, difficulty breathing, and paralysis
    - Once they show signs of respiratory distress their mucus membranes may quickly turn from pink to blue (cyanotic)...**this is an emergency!**
  - *Death can occur within minutes* to an hour after exposure
  - Prognosis is poor even if treatment is started immediately

Other notes about algae bloom:

- Areas where fertilizer run off may be high tend to have higher occurrences of algae bloom



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- The fertilizer feeds the microorganisms and they grow prolifically
- Animal wastes also add to the nutrient environment that algae love
- Blue-green algae can also be **toxic to people**....hence the reason parks will close local lakes once an algae bloom has appeared
- Livestock and wildlife are often found dead near infected sources of water



<http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/poison/blue-green-algae/>