

FACT SHEET

Duck hunting and blue-green algae

Duck hunters need to be aware of the dangers of hunting in waters affected by blue-green algae. Blue-green algae is potentially toxic and can be dangerous to both humans and dogs if ingested.

Recognising blue-green algae

Blue-green algae blooms can be common at the start of the duck season when high water temperatures, high light intensity and little rainfall create the perfect environment for the algae to grow. While there may be information signs warning of blue-green algae affected water, there may not be. Therefore hunters should be on the lookout for the signs of blue-green algae affected water. A bloom or scum may be visible across the water surface. Blooms range in colour from dark-green to yellowish brown, and algae may be present on the water surface that can look like green paint, thick scum or "pea soup".



Keeping yourself safe

The Chief Health Officer advises that blue-green algae may produce toxins that affect human health. The only way to determine whether toxins are produced is through testing. Do not consume any water or let your pets consume any water that may be affected by blue-green algae.

Water affected by blue-green algae can cause health effects in humans which include skin irritation and rashes, gastroenteritis, headache, fevers, muscle weakness, seizures and respiratory failure.

Follow advice on any information signs in affected areas and avoid contact with the water until authorities advise there is no longer a health risk.

If you think you are experiencing symptoms related to exposure to blue-green algae, seek medical attention immediately.

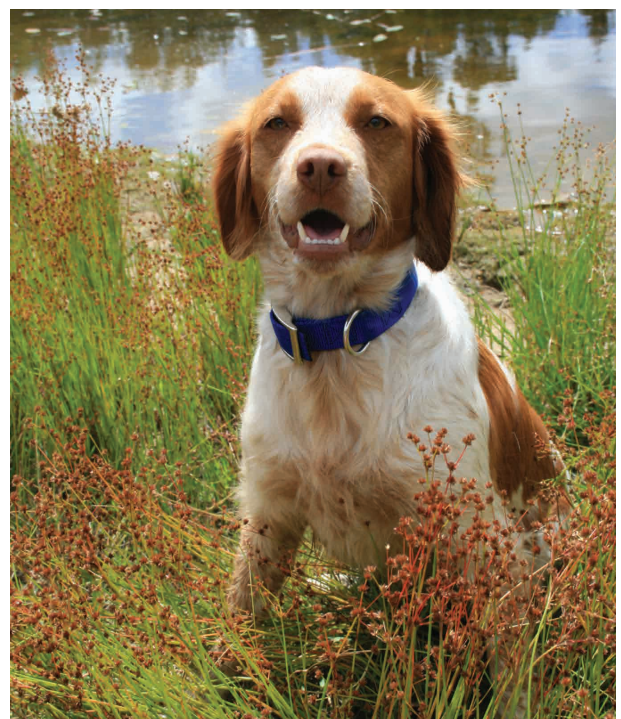
There is limited research in how ducks are affected by blue-green algae. Studies have shown that toxins can accumulate in the internal organs of fish and possibly ducks. As a precaution, discard the internal organs (particularly the liver) of ducks and rinse the duck with clean water prior to cooking and eating. Offal should not be eaten.

Keeping your dog safe

Dogs are particularly susceptible to poisoning by blue-green algae and dog deaths have been reported after swimming in or drinking affected water. Protect your dog by keeping it from swimming in or ingesting water suspected to be affected by blue-green algae.

The offal from ducks that have come into contact with affected waterways should not be fed to dogs.

In the event of potential exposure, watch your dog for signs of poisoning, including lethargy, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea and seizures. If your dog shows any of these symptoms, contact a veterinarian immediately.



Precautions you should take

If you suspect water to be contaminated with blue-green algae, make sure you take the following precautions:

- Avoid wading, unless you are wearing undamaged waders
- Do not consume the water, or allow your dog to consume the water
- Do not eat the offal of any ducks taken from contaminated wetlands, lakes and waterways, or feed the offal to your dog
- Do not let your dog submerge itself in the water and, if it does, wash your dog thoroughly in clean water (wearing gloves) before it starts to groom or lick itself
- Avoid using blue-green algae affected water and use alternative sources
- Be aware that boiling algal water does not remove toxins from the water.



Further resources

Monthly reporting on significant blue-green algal blooms in Victorian waterways can be found at www.water.vic.gov.au

Reporting will also be available from the relevant Water Corporation. Links to the websites of Victoria's Rural, Urban and Metropolitan Water Corporations can also be found at www.water.vic.gov.au

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