



## What is Harmful Algae?

Harmful algae can occur floating in the water column or be attached to the bottom of the lake or river. In freshwater, common pelagic (in the water column) harmful algal blooms (HABs) are caused by overgrowths of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae). They can cause water quality issues and can sometimes produce toxins that can be dangerous to people and pets.

## How to Identify Harmful Algae

You can't tell if a bloom is toxic by looking at it, but some signs may include: discolored water (appearing blue, green, brown, or red), a "spilled paint" appearance, and/or scum/floating mat on the surface or shoreline.

## What is Benthic Algae?

Benthic algae (algae that grows on the lake or river bottom) can also produce toxins, which can be even more potent than those found in traditional HABs. Benthic algae can be attached to debris or wash up in clumps where your pet may encounter it on the shore.



Drone image of a HAB event on Port Bay, Lake Ontario.  
Photo credit: Roy Widrig.



HAB event in the St. Lawrence River. It's impossible to tell visually, by taste or odor whether such a bloom is toxic (a HAB). Water samples must be analyzed for the presence of toxins. Photo credit: John Cannaday.

## How Can Dogs Be Exposed?

When toxins are present, dogs can be exposed by drinking the water, by eating washed up mats or scum of toxic algae, or by having skin contact with water. After leaving the water, dogs can also be poisoned by grooming their fur and paws. **If you suspect your dog has been exposed, seek immediate veterinary care.**

## Report Possible HABs in NY:

### NYSDEC:

Email: [HABsInfo@dec.ny.gov](mailto:HABsInfo@dec.ny.gov)  
<https://bit.ly/nysdechabs>

### NYS Dept of Health:

Email: [harmfulalgae@health.ny.gov](mailto:harmfulalgae@health.ny.gov)

### More Resources

#### New York Sea Grant

[www.nyseagrant.org/habs](http://www.nyseagrant.org/habs)

#### Cornell Animal Health

<https://bit.ly/cornellanimalhealthhabs>

## GET HELP!

If you suspect your dog has been exposed,  
seek immediate veterinary care.

### 24/7 Emergency Hotlines:

#### Pet Poison Helpline

Phone: 855-764-7661

\$85 per incident fee

<https://bit.ly/pethelplinehabs>

Also available as iPhone app

#### ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center

Phone: 888-426-4435

\$65 consultation fee

<https://bit.ly/aspcapetcarehabs>

#### Cornell Veterinary

#### Emergency Hotline

Phone: 607-253-3060

<https://bit.ly/cornellvethabs>

## What Are Some Signs of Poisoning?

If your dog has been in a body of water with a suspected or identified HAB or other toxic algal bloom, closely monitor for symptoms, which can occur anywhere from minutes to several hours after exposure.

### Look for the following symptoms:

- repeated vomiting
- diarrhea or bloody stool
- collapse
- pale gums
- abdominal swelling (tender to touch)
- excessive drooling
- stumbling, seizures, convulsions
- paralysis
- rigid muscles
- difficulty breathing
- skin rashes, hives



## How Do I Prevent Exposure?

When possible, use a leash and don't let your dog wade, swim, or eat/drink material in water with an algal bloom.

### If you think your dog has been exposed:

1. Remove them from the water immediately
2. Don't let them lick their fur or paws
3. Rinse or wash them with fresh water
4. Dry them thoroughly with a clean towel
5. Use gloves for protection if you can

Then  
monitor for  
symptoms!



For more information from New York Sea Grant contact:

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