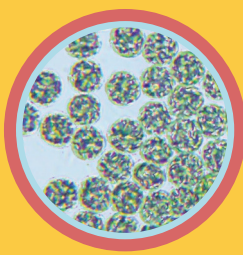


# KEEPING YOUR DOG SAFE FROM CYANOBACTERIA (BLUE-GREEN ALGAE) IN FLORIDA



## CYANOBACTERIA (BLUE-GREEN ALGAE)

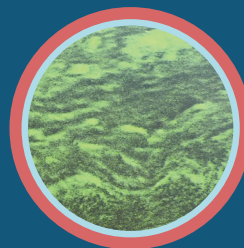
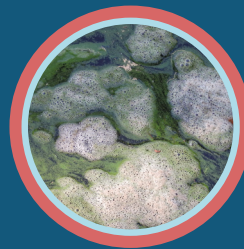
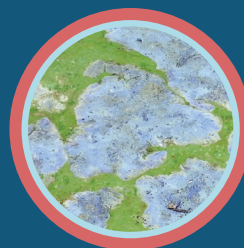


are the oldest bacteria on Earth; naturally found in all types of water — fresh, brackish, and marine. Like plants, cyanobacteria rely on sunlight for food

and quickly multiply in warm, nutrient-rich environments. Cyanobacterial blooms occur more commonly in the warm summer months but can occur all year long. In 2018, six dogs in Martin County became sick from exposure to heavy blooms in the St. Lucie River of the cyanobacteria species, *Microcystis aeruginosa*. One dog died as a result.

*Photo: Lake Worth Waterkeeper*

## RECOGNIZING ALGAE BLOOMS:



- Discoloration of the water – typically bright green or blue green, but can vary.
- Scum layer on the surface or just below.
- Thick layer of foam or “pea soup” appearance.
- Thickest on downwind or protected shores.
- Can also look like small green specks or grass-like clusters.

## IF YOUR DOG HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO A BLOOM AND EXHIBITS THESE SIGNS:

- Vomiting\*
- Dark or bloody urine\*
- Dark or tar-like diarrhea
- Weakness, stumbling, falling
- Difficulty breathing, drooling
- Seizures and tremors



**Seek Veterinary Care Immediately!**

*\*Vomit and urine can be diagnosed for exposure to Microcystis*

## KEEPING YOUR DOG SAFE FROM BLUE-GREEN ALGAE EXPOSURE:

- Supervise your dog at all times.
- Only let your dog swim in clear water without signs of blue-green algae.
- If your dog swims in a blue-green algae bloom, wash off with clean water and observe.
- Bring plenty of fresh water for your dog to drink.



**If you are unsure about observed conditions, stay away from the water: When in doubt, stay out!**

# CYANOBACTERIA AND DOGS: BY THE NUMBERS

**260** dogs were documented to have been sickened by cyanobacteria in 27 US states from the 1920s to 2012.

**83%** of those dogs died.

**9** blue-green algae blooms occurred in the St. Lucie River between 2004 and 2018.

**6** dogs were sickened in Martin County in 2018 from cyanobacteria and their toxins either by direct ingestion, or from eating dead fish covered in cyanobacteria.

**1** dog died. Lab tests showed evidence of the cyanobacterial toxin, microcystin, in the dog's liver.

**\$3,000** was the average cost to treat each of the surviving dogs for liver damage due to cyanobacterial toxicity. One owner paid almost \$13,000 to treat two dogs (\$USD).

**Discourage and prevent your dog from chewing on dead fish and other decayed material.**



*Microcystis aeruginosa*. Photo: Lake Worth Waterkeeper

Please watch your dogs near bodies of water – especially during the summer months. Dogs tend to drink water when swimming, and lick their fur afterwards.

**If there are signs of a blue-green algae bloom, keep your dogs away.**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

### University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

- <https://water.ifas.ufl.edu/harmful-algal-blooms>

### State of Florida

- [www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/aquatic-toxins/](http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/aquatic-toxins/)
- <https://www.visitflorida.org/resources/crisis-preparation/blue-green-algae-information/>

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- **Cyanobacteria FAQ:** [www.cdc.gov/habs/pdf/cyanobacteria\\_faq.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/habs/pdf/cyanobacteria_faq.pdf)
- **Fact sheets for dog owners:** [https://www.cdc.gov/habs/pdf/algal\\_bloom\\_poster.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/habs/pdf/algal_bloom_poster.pdf)
- **Vet reference card:** [https://www.cdc.gov/habs/pdf/habsveterinarian\\_card.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/habs/pdf/habsveterinarian_card.pdf)

### Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-06/documents/lessons-learned-2018-microcystin-6-20-2019.pdf>

### References

- Foss, et al. 2019 – <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6651/11/8/456/htm>
- Backer et al. 2013 – <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3798876/>

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