



Fact Sheet for Veterinary Professionals

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)

What are HABs?

Harmful algal blooms develop when cyanobacteria and algae grow rapidly, which typically occurs in warmer months when water temperatures are elevated. HABs can be harmful to humans, pets, and ecosystems.

Where can they occur?

Warm fresh, marine and brackish waters that have abundant nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus.



How can someone recognize affected areas?

HABs may look like foam, scum or thick layers of algae on the surface of the water, and they may even cause the water to appear green, brown, red, or blue; however, HABs are not always visible. There may be a foul smell associated with a HAB as well. It is important to remember that there are not always physical signs present.

What are the symptoms in animals that may have come into contact with a HAB?

- Physical: hypersalivation, weakness, labored breathing, seizures, other neurologic symptoms
- Chemical: elevated liver enzymes, low blood sugar, low protein, abnormal coagulation

How can you help?

If you treat pets that you believe have been exposed to HABs, please contact DHEC if you have information on the body of water where exposure may have occurred.

Additional Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/habs/general.html>

<https://www.epa.gov/cyano-habs>

<https://www.avma.org/News/JAVMANews/Pages/180415c.aspx>

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

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/news/blue-green-algae-symptoms-tips/>

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www.scdhec.gov/harmful-algal-blooms