

Educating Dog Owners about Harmful Algal Bloom Toxins

Harmful algal blooms, or HABs, are an emerging threat to human and animal health worldwide because of the potent toxins they can produce. HABs, especially in New York's fresh waters, include overgrowths of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) that cause water quality problems in lakes and ponds, including the occasional production of potent toxins. These toxins can poison people, household pets, waterfowl and livestock.

In recent years HABs have caused increased dog deaths in many freshwater regions because of the increased numbers of HABs and the lack of awareness many dog owners have of the potential health risks to their pets.

NYSG Responds

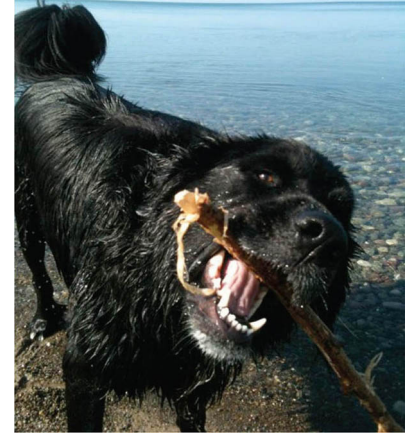
Because of the increased number of dog illnesses and deaths, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) developed dog health safety guidelines for dog owners from a variety of research sources, including veterinary toxicologist Dr. Karyn Bischoff at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. The brochure provides pet owners with a safety checklist of the symptoms of HABs poisoning and steps that can be taken if a dog is exposed to HABs.

A special training session for veterinarians on the risks of HAB toxins to dogs was organized for the 2014 New York State Veterinary Conference at Cornell. This conference is attended by veterinarians from across New York State and the U.S.

Protecting Man's Best Friend

The dog health/HAB guidelines were published in a "Dogs and Harmful Algal Blooms" brochure that has been disseminated to several thousand dog owners nationwide. The brochure is also available online at www.nyseagrant.org.

A news release about the brochure was disseminated to more than 5 million readers of dog sporting magazines as well as the popular press. The brochure was published in Ducks Unlimited Magazine and is expected to also appear in sporting dog magazines.



Dogs who like to frolic in the water may be at health risk from algal toxins. Photo: Maxine Appleby

"This brochure will be a great addition to New York Sea Grant's outreach activities informing the public and management community of the rise and threats of freshwater CyanoHABs"

— John Wickham,

NOAA National Ocean Service Program Manager

Partners:

- Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Ocean Service
- SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry
- Stony Brook University School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences
- NOAA Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research

The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is Healthy New York Coastal Ecosystems and Habitats

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA.

New York Sea Grant Extension

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