Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)
What to look for and what to do
When in doubt, stay out!

What You Can Do

Blue-green algae are a natural part of water-based ecosystems. They become a problem when nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) are present in concentrations above what would occur naturally. To address the problem of high nutrient levels in our lakes and ponds, we can begin in our own backyards and in our watersheds.

- Plant rain gardens to reduce runoff from rainfall. They're also great for flood control.
- Only fertilize when necessary and follow instructions on the bag. More is not better.
- Pet waste, waterfowl droppings, and leaking septic systems can also contribute. Anything done to reduce these nutrient inputs will ultimately improve water quality.
- If there is a waterbody on your property, plant buffer strips near the water's edge to absorb runoff.

For more information, please visit our website at www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness.

Private Waterbodies

A "jar test" is quick self-assessment tool to see if your private farm pond or lake may have blue-green algae present. For detailed instructions on how to conduct this simple test and other information on harmful algal blooms, visit www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness. Contact the KSVDL Client Care at 866-512-5650 or visit their website at www.ksvdl.org for further diagnostic help with a private pond.

If you, your pet, or your livestock become ill, seek medical or veterinary attention immediately.

For additional information, please visit www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness or call the KDHE HAB Hotline at 785-296-1664.

Kansas Department of Health and Environment
To protect and improve the health and environment of all Kansans.
What are HABs?

- Blue-green algae are bacteria that grow in water, contain chlorophyll, and can photosynthesize. They are not a new occurrence.
- When these bacteria grow rapidly, it can create Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB).
- These can sometimes produce toxins that affect people, pets, livestock, and wildlife. The toxins can affect the skin, liver, and nervous system.
- People and animals may be exposed to toxins via ingestion, skin contact, or inhalation of contaminated water.
- The most common human health effects from HABs can include vomiting, diarrhea, skin rashes, eye irritation, and respiratory symptoms.
- Boiling water does not remove or inactivate toxins from blue-green algae, and there is no known antidote.
- Animal deaths due to HAB toxins have been documented, so:

When in doubt, stay out!

A microscopical view of a Microcystis colony

What to Look For

- Water has a scummy, thick mat, is foamy, or looks like it has paint spilled on it.
- Water is colored red, pea-green, blue, blue-green or brownish red.

What to Do If You See HABs

If you see what you believe to be a Harmful Algal Bloom, keep everyone, including pets, from entering the water. If the bloom is on a public lake or pond, you may report your concerns by completing the Algal Bloom Report Form on the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Website at www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness. The Algal Bloom Reporting Form is located in the navigation menu. You can also call the HAB hotline at 785-296-1664.

Look for posted signs before entering the water.

Be Aware

HABs may become more or less visible with changing environmental conditions.