



MENDOCINO COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

HEALTH ADVISORY

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TO: MENDOCINO COUNTY NEWS MEDIA

FR: MENDOCINO COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

MENDOCINO COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

Ukiah, California: September 24, 2015

TOXIC BLUE GREEN ALGAE IN MENDOCINO COUNTY'S EEL RIVER

Confirmation of the presence of toxic cyanobacteria, commonly referred to as "blue green algae", has been received for the Eel River in Eastern Mendocino County. Recently a dog that was known to have swam in the river, died shortly thereafter. The death was confirmed as algae-related by test results from the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory.

We wish to advise and educate the public that the toxic blue green algae is currently present in the Eel River in Eastern Mendocino County. The extended drought and summer conditions are contributing to the algae blooms due in part to low water levels. Most algae is benign, however, some species of blue green algae have the ability to produce toxins, including neurotoxins and dermatologic toxins which can cause serious health affects for humans and animals.

Algae blooms can look like green, blue-green, white or brown foam, scum or mats floating on the water or along the shore. You cannot tell if an algae bloom is toxic by looking at it. Children and pets are the most at risk and should be prevented from entering water that contains algae. Dogs are particularly vulnerable because they tend to drink the water and lick the algae off their fur. Children tend to take in water when playing and splashing in it. It is best to keep both children and pets from water that looks suspicious, and wash pets immediately if they have been in contact.

Algae toxins can cause a variety of symptoms including contact irritation (eye, nose, mouth and skin), gastro-intestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, hepatic inflammation) and neurological symptoms (muscle tremors, seizures, difficulty breathing).

Never drink untreated river water. Property owners that draw water from the river for any use should never drink or come into direct contact with water that may contain blue green algae.

Boiling water is not adequate to eliminate toxins. Contact Mendocino County Environmental Health for more information at (707) 234-6625.

Healthy water habits can prevent illness. Recreational water users of the Eel River should follow these healthy water habits:

- Be informed – learn to identify blue green algae (additional information below)
- Use common sense: if the water looks inviting, enjoy! If you are suspicious, be cautious.
- Avoid all algae scums or mats.
- Do not let pets or children drink, swim, wade, or play near scums or mats (particularly along the shoreline).
- Prevent your pets from licking their fur after contact with algae, and wash them immediately.
- Always wash your children and pets with clean water after recreation in the river.
- Get medical attention for your children or pets if you think they have made contact with blue green algae toxins. Be sure to tell the medical professional about possible contact with blue green algae.

If you have a pet that becomes ill or dies after exposure to blue green algae, please report the information to the Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency - Environmental Health at 707-234-6625.

For further information you may visit the following websites:

California Department of Public Health:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/environhealth/water/Pages/Bluegreenalgae.asp>

Center for Disease Control:

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainment/tips/algablooms.html>

State Water Resources Control Board:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/bluegreen_algae/



Photo of Blue Green Algae.

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