

Dangerous Drinking Water for Dogs

Our topics for this week are:

- Blue-green algae poisoning, including
 - Causes
 - Signs
 - Treatment
 - Prevention
- Other dangers of drinking or swimming in stagnant water

Abby may be a water connoisseur, but most dogs are not picky at all about what water they drink. The nearest water is the best. That should not be a big deal, right? Dogs have drunk pond and lake water for thousands of years. It is the natural source of drinking water for them.

However, today's pond and lake water is not your grandfather's pond and lake water. With global warming and the overuse of phosphorus in fertilizers and household cleaning products and the runoff of nitrogen from fertilizer, septic tanks, or lagoons, the water may have a green or red tint caused by blooms of blue-green algae. Blue-green algae is also called cyanobacteria which are one-celled microorganisms. Cyanobacteria can produce cyanotoxins. Cyanotoxins are among the most poisonous substances known in nature.

In warm weather, particularly later summer and early fall, cyanotoxins sicken and kill many animals, especially wild birds, dogs, and cattle.

Blooms may or may not be visible. They can stay below the surface of the water or appear as foam, scum, or mats, blown to the edge of the water by the wind. Less than 50% are visible on the surface. Even if it is visible, you cannot tell by its appearance whether it has produced cyanotoxins, less than 1% do. Although blue-green algae toxins can occur in saltwater or freshwater, most cases of reported poisoning of animals involve fresh water.

A dog's exposure to cyanotoxins can be by drinking the contaminated water or swimming or wading in it. They will typically lick the contaminated water from their wet haircoat. Signs of poisoning are weakness, lethargy, loss of appetite, and seizures.

Prevention involves avoiding water that is discolored or smells bad. If your dog drinks or licks potentially contaminated water, induce it to vomit with 3% hydrogen peroxide (1 teaspoon per 5 lb bodyweight) and rinse its haircoat off. Do not overuse fertilizers and maintain properly

operating septic tanks and lagoons. By the way, stagnant or slow moving water can also be a source of leptospirosis or tularemia, among other diseases for your dogs.

If you're interested in particular subjects contact us at CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com

Now let's recap the key points to remember from today's episode:

- 1. You should not let your dog drink from stagnant or slow-moving water sources, such as ponds and lakes.**
- 2. If your dog drinks or swims in water with algae or a rotten plant smell, induce the dog to vomit with 3% hydrogen peroxide and wash its haircoat.**

More information on animal handling is available in my books, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint* and *Concise Textbook of Small Animal Handling* published by CRC Press. They are also available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is available at: www.betteranimalhandling.com

Don't forget, serious injury or death can result from handling and restraining some animals. Safe and effective handling and restraint requires experience and continual practice. Acquisition of the needed skills should be under the supervision of an experienced animal handler.