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Blue-green Algae Identified in Lake LaMoure and Twin Lakes; Health Officials Advise Caution When Recreating

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Departments of Health (NDDoH) and Agriculture (NDDA), Animal Health Division, have issued a blue-green algae advisory for Lake LaMoure and Twin Lakes (located in LaMoure County) due to detectable levels of microcystin in the water. Microcystin is a cyanotoxin caused by blue-green algae. When present in water, cyanotoxins are dangerous for both people and animals. Although the level of cyanotoxin was below the state threshold for issuing warnings, the algae can reproduce rapidly, with a corresponding rise in the cyanotoxin levels. With the upcoming warm weekend ahead, the NDDoH and NDDA urge residents to err on the side of caution and avoid waters that look discolored or scummy, or that have a foul odor in these lakes.

The production of blue-green algae often happens in hot weather in bodies of water that are used by people, pets and livestock. Exposure from ingesting affected water can cause illness in people and animals, and can result in death. There are no known antidotes for the toxins.

Blue-green algae discolor the water they live in, and can cause foam, scum or mats to appear on the surface. People and animals that swallow water containing cyanotoxins can become sick with severe diarrhea and vomiting; numb lips, tingling fingers and toes; dizziness; or rashes, hives or skin blisters. Children are at higher risk than adults for illness because their smaller size can allow them to get a relatively larger dose of toxin.

Please take the following steps to avoid exposure to cyanotoxins:

- Respect any advisories announced by public health authorities. If you see posted signs or hear messages to stay out of a certain body of water, respect the warning.
- Do not swim, water ski or boat in areas where the water is discolored or where you see foam, scum or mats of green or blue-green algae on the water.

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- If you accidentally swim in water that might have a cyanobacteria bloom, rinse off with fresh water as soon as possible.
- Do not let pets or livestock swim in or drink from areas where the water is discolored or where you see foam, scum or mats of algae on the water.
- If pets (especially dogs) swim in scummy water, rinse them off immediately – do not let them lick the algae (and toxins) off their fur.
- Don't irrigate lawns or golf courses with pond water that looks scummy or smells bad.

For more information on public health issues, contact the North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5210. For specific questions concerning Lake LaMoure or Twin Lakes, contact Tony Hanson with LaMoure County Public Health at 701.883.5356.

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