

**Benton-Franklin
Health District**
www.bfhd.wa.gov

Kennewick
7102 West Okanogan Place

Pasco
412 West Clark Street

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**Benton-Franklin Health
District Website**
www.bfhd.wa.gov

**Washington Department
of Health**
www.doh.wa.gov

**Centers for Disease
Control**
www.cdc.gov

Rev 9/2019

Primary Contact
Contact: BFHD Front Desk
Phone: 509-460-4200

HEALTH DISTRICT INVESTIGATING POTENTIAL TOXIC ALGAE NEAR POPULAR PARKS

Three dogs reported dead over the weekend

September 13, 2021

KENNEWICK — Benton-Franklin Health District is investigating Columbia River park areas in Richland and Ringold following the deaths of three dogs after swimming near Leslie Groves and Howard Amon parks, as well as upstream. Water samples have been collected and warning signs posted. Harmful algae blooms have been found in some Washington lakes and rivers.

Dogs and other animals are often exposed by drinking contaminated water, swallowing water while swimming, or licking cyanobacteria from their fur. If you suspect your pets or livestock have been exposed to a toxic algae bloom, immediately wash them off with clean water to keep them from licking the bacteria off their fur. [Possible signs](#) that your pet might have been exposed to a harmful algae bloom may include vomiting and/or diarrhea, loss of coordination and tremors and seizures. Prompt treatment is important in all cases of poisoning, but since blue-green algae attacks so fast, speedy intervention is critical. If you know your dog consumed algae, seek immediate medical care.

While cyanobacteria blooms in rivers are rare, the hot, dry weather and low water flows can lead to algae blooms. The extreme heat this summer and lower than normal water levels can create an ideal environment for organisms to easily grow and multiply. Algae [blooms](#) can vary in appearance, but commonly look like pea soup or are blue-green or turquoise in color. Freshwater algae blooms caused by cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) are most common in lakes, but can occur in rivers and streams with warm, slow moving and stagnant waters.

The toxicity of each bloom can vary and is difficult to predict. Toxicity can change from one day to the next. It isn't possible to determine how dangerous a bloom is to people and animals by looking at it. Only testing can tell if it is dangerous.

The public is encouraged to take the following precautions when choosing a body of water for recreation:

- Look for signs of toxic algae blooms and pay attention to signage. When in doubt, stay out!

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- Do not swim in and limit exposure to water that is under a health advisory or is listed as having a toxic algae bloom on the [Washington State Department of Ecology toxic algae tracking site](#).
- Individuals who swim or play in the water should shower with soap and water when done
- Contact a healthcare provider immediately if you become ill or have [symptoms](#) of after a suspected exposure to algae bloom.
- Report suspected toxic algae blooms online at the Washington State [toxic algae tracking site](#) or contact your [local health jurisdiction](#).

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