



Public Health Administration

Danette York, M.P.H., , Director
Andy Miller, M.D., Health Officer

202 Mira Loma Drive
Oroville, California 95965

T: 530.552.4000
F: 530.538.2164

buttecounty.net/publichealth

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Lab Results Confirm Toxins in Chico's Horseshoe Lake *Public Urged to Exercise Caution*

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. – The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, with assistance from Butte County Environmental Health and the City of Chico Parks Division, collected water samples last week from Chico's Horseshoe Lake in Upper Bidwell Park. Laboratory results identified the presence of three different potential cyanobacteria toxin producers. Two cyanotoxins were detected in these samples, with one sample found to have concentrations just above the State's warning levels. Until warning signs are lifted, residents, dog owners, and other recreational users are urged to exercise caution and avoid contact with the water.

The City of Chico Parks Division has placed barricades around the lake and advises, even though this is an off-leash area, dogs should remain leashed if walking around or near the lake. Dogs who accidentally enter the water should be rinsed with clean water as soon as possible to rinse the algal material out of their fur. Learn more about [cyanobacterial poisoning in dogs](#).

Algae and cyanobacteria, the organisms that cause harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), have existed for billions of years as essential components of freshwater ecosystems. When certain conditions favor their growth – warm weather, stagnant water flows, excessive nutrient inputs – they can multiply rapidly, creating the harmful blooms.

Signs of cyanobacterial toxin poisoning in people:

Cyanobacteria can produce toxins that have the potential to harm people, pets, wildlife, and livestock. Children and dogs are most likely to be affected by HABs because of their smaller size, increased potential to swallow water and algal material, and tendency to stay in the water longer. The following symptoms may occur within 48 hours of exposure to a waterbody with a confirmed algal bloom:

- Sore throat or congestion;
- Coughing, wheezing, or difficulty breathing;
- Red, or itchy skin, or a rash;
- Skin blisters or hives;
- Earache or irritated eyes;
- Diarrhea or vomiting;
- Agitation;
- Headache; and/or,
- Abdominal pain

Get medical treatment immediately if you think that you or your pet has gotten sick after going in the water. Be sure to alert the medical professional to the possible contact with cyanobacteria.

The crucial first step to staying safe during an outing on or near a waterway is to distinguish cyanobacteria from other algae and non-toxic water plants. HABs can be a variety of colors such as green, white, red or brown and may look like paint floating on the water. Not all HABs will appear on the water's surface. Some form mats at the bottom of a water body (such as in wadeable rivers and near shorelines), and others float at various depths.

The California Water Boards recommend that people enjoying the outdoors this summer at lakes, rivers or streams practice healthy water habits:

- Heed instruction on posted advisories, if present
- Avoid algae and scum in the water and on the shore
- Keep an eye on children and pets (dogs)
- If you think a HAB is present, do not let pets and other animals go into or drink the water, or eat the scum/algal accumulations on the shore
- Don't drink the water or use it for cooking
- Wash yourself, your family and your pets with clean water after water play
- If you catch fish, throw away guts and clean fillets with tap water or bottled water before cooking
- Avoid eating shellfish if you think a HAB is present

For more information about HABs, please visit:

- California Harmful Algal Blooms [Portal](#)
- California Department of Public Health [Resource Page](#)
- U.S. EPA Cyanobacterial HABs in Water Bodies [Resource Page](#)

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