

Jody Holthaus, Agent  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Livestock and Natural Resources

## Validation!

When son #3 moved to western Kansas, a conversation ensued about the changes in humidity. He would call back complaining about how hot it was, and I would mention the lack of humidity. He thought I was crazy! Now that he has moved back to Eastern Kansas, even though the temperature is not in the 100's, the humidity is getting to him!

I'm not sure if the increased temperatures and humidity can be blamed on climate warming or not, but one thing is sure, we are seeing more and more Blue/Green algae in ponds. The literature says, this is a result of climate warming.

Blue-green algae are not algae at all, but types of bacteria called cyanobacteria that are normally present in many lakes. This type of bacteria thrives in warm, nutrient-rich water. When conditions are right, the bacteria can grow quickly forming "blooms."

Blue-green alga blooms are often described as looking like pea soup or spilled green paint.

However, blooms aren't always large and dense and can sometimes cover small portions of the lake with little visible algae present. Blooms can also produce a swampy odor when the cells break down. When blue-green algal blooms produce cyanotoxins (toxins produced by cyanobacteria) that can make humans and animals sick, they are considered harmful. In general, algae are not harmful.

Blue-green algae prefer warm, calm, sunny weather and water temperatures higher than 75 °F. Blooms usually occur during summer and early fall, but can occur other times of the year, if conditions are right. Harmful algae can be found everywhere in Kansas, but thrive in warm, shallow, nutrient-rich lakes. They will often be found on the downwind side of a pond or in a secluded bay or shoreline. You can become sick if you swallow, have skin contact with, or breathe in airborne water droplets while swimming, boating, waterskiing, tubing, bathing, or showering in water that has harmful algae or if you drink water that contains algal toxins. If you become sick, symptoms you might experience include vomiting, diarrhea, rash, eye irritation, cough, sore throat, and headache. Symptoms generally begin hours to 2 days after exposure.

Pets, especially dogs, are susceptible to harmful algae because they swallow more water while swimming and doing activities like retrieving a ball from the water. They are also less deterred by green, smelly water that may contain harmful algae. Animals can experience symptoms within minutes of exposure to the toxins. Symptoms they might experience include vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, difficulty breathing, and seizures. In the worst cases, animals have died. If your pet experiences these symptoms after exposure to algae, contact your veterinarian. This can also be toxic to cattle and other livestock.

If you suspect your pond has Blue/Green algae, you can try the Jar and Stick test, provided by KDHE, for your convenience this can be found on our website: [www.meadowlark.ksu.edu](http://www.meadowlark.ksu.edu). If you conduct the test and you think it is positive, the Kansas Veterinary Diagnostics Lab, can also conduct a test, the charge is \$21.