

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit



MEDIA RELEASE

July 26, 2012

Blue – Green Algae

This time of year, there is the potential for Blue-Green Algae blooms to be present in our lakes and rivers. Blue green algae (cyanobacteria) occur especially in warm, shallow undisturbed water that is nutrient rich. People and pets may be exposed to cyanobacterial toxins by drinking contaminated water and by swimming or bathing in it. Human health effects from coming into contact with these toxins may include: itchy irritated eyes and skin and if the toxins are swallowed, symptoms such as headaches, fever, diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting may occur.

The Ministry of the Environment has identified this toxin in Charleston Lake but at a level below the Ontario Drinking Water Standards. This means that presently the water is safe to swim in but residents should be watchful of algae blooms which can be shades of blue, blue-green, yellow brown or red. If blooms are visible you should:

- Avoid using the lake water for drinking, swimming, bathing or showering. These precautions also apply to your pets and livestock.
- If skin contact does occur, wash with soap and water or rinse thoroughly with clean water to remove algae.
- **Do not boil affected water as it does not remove the toxin.**
- Water affected by the toxin **should not** be used for drinking, cooking or bathing. Pets should avoid affected waters

On lakes and rivers where blue-green algae blooms are present, people who use the surface water for their private drinking water supply should consider an alternate, protected source of water.

If you suspect that your pet's health has been affected by blue-green algae contact your vet.

If you see any blooms you can contact MOE to report the bloom.