

Toxic algae can kill, know what to look for

What it typically looks like

In rivers

Toxic algae mats typically appear as dark brown/black mats attached to rocks along the riverbed, when exposed they often have a earthy or musty smell.

The mats can detach and accumulate along the river edge, increasing the risk of contact.



In lakes, ponds, lagoons, and some rivers

Free floating toxic algae (planktonic) may be present if the water is cloudy, discoloured (especially blue-green), or has scums or small globules suspended in it.



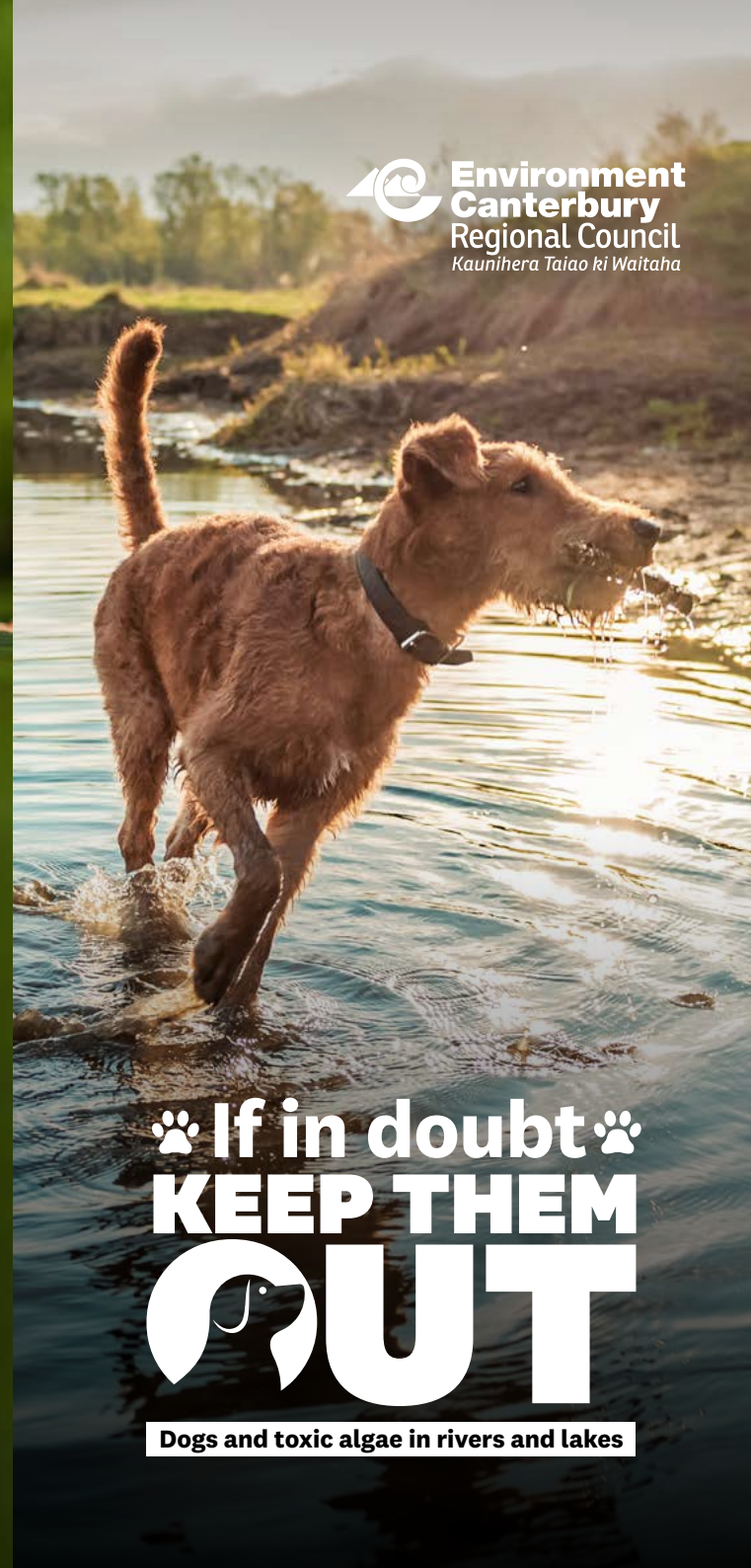
🐾 If in doubt 🐾
KEEP THEM
OUT



If you are in any doubt about the water quality, then keep your dog on a leash and away from the water.

You, your doctor or your veterinarian can report toxic algae blooms to Environment Canterbury at any time by calling **0800 324 636** or going online to ecan.govt.nz/contact

More information about toxic algae and health warnings for Canterbury's waterways can be found at ecan.govt.nz/health-warnings/toxic-algae



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Dogs and toxic algae in rivers and lakes

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It's important that you are familiar with what toxic algae looks like.

Dogs are more at risk to toxic algae because they are attracted to the musty smell. It only takes a teaspoon of toxic algae to make your dog sick.

Health risks

For humans

Toxic algae can be harmful to people. At popular monitored sites take note of any human health warnings.

For pets and livestock

Pets and livestock, particularly dogs, are at risk from toxic algae if they swallow algal mats when swimming or drinking from rivers and lakes. Symptoms in pets and livestock include panting, lethargy, muscle tremors, twitching and convulsions. In extreme cases, poisoning can also cause death 30 minutes after symptoms first appear. Contact your veterinarian if you see these symptoms after visiting a river or lake.



What is it?

Toxic algae is naturally occurring. When it blooms it has the potential to produce sufficient toxins to cause serious harm to humans, pets and livestock.

What causes blooms?

Blooms form when toxic algae starts to multiply very quickly, usually due to changes in environmental conditions such as warm temperatures, sunlight, low or stable river flows, and high levels of nutrients.

When to avoid the water?

Look out for thick dark brown/black mats, often with a slimy velvety texture and a musky smell. Also avoid water that is cloudy or discoloured, or has small globules or coloured scum.

What are the common symptoms?

Symptoms of toxic algae poisoning can occur within 30 minutes, including:

For people

- tingling or numbness around the fingertips and/or mouth
- breathing difficulties
- gastrointestinal symptoms
- skin rashes.

For pets and livestock:

- panting
- lethargy
- muscle tremors
- twitching
- convulsions.

If symptoms appear after being in contact with a waterway, contact your doctor or a veterinarian immediately.