




MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 6, 2010

TO: Ohio Health Commissioners, Directors of Environmental Health and Directors of Nursing

FROM: Alvin D. Jackson, M.D., Director of Health 

SUBJECT: Harmful Algal Bloom-related Illness Reporting

This year Ohio is experiencing, what are commonly referred to as, Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) in certain inland lakes. HABs have the potential to release toxins into the water where they grow. Depending on the species of organism(s), neurotoxins or hepatotoxins can be released. Humans and animals can experience illness from exposure to these toxins. For humans, exposure is often related to recreational activity (i.e., swimming, boating, fishing) occurring in contaminated water bodies.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH), with assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has developed case definitions and human and animal illness reporting forms for HAB-related illnesses (see attached or download at www.odh.ohio.gov). Please share these forms with providers in your district.

Pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Chapter 3701-3-02 and the Infectious Disease Control Manual, healthcare providers are to submit reports of human illness related to exposure to HABs to the local health district where the ill individual resides. Reports are to be made under Class C – “waterborne disease outbreaks; report single cases of toxin poisoning associated with exposure to water with a confirmed algal bloom by the end of the next business day to the local public health department where the patient resides.”

Local health districts are to report human illness events related to HABs to the ODH Outbreak Response and BT Investigation Team (ORBIT) by calling 614-995-5599 and faxing the completed “HAB-Related Human Illness Report Form” to 614-564-2456.

Reports of suspected domestic animal illnesses can be reported to the ODH Zoonotic Disease Program (ZDP) at 614-752-1029, select option two. Please see the attached joint memo from the Ohio Department of Agriculture State Veterinarian and the ODH State Public Health Veterinarian which will be sent to all Ohio Veterinary Medical Association members, including the “HAB-Related Animal Illness Report Form. Local health districts receiving reports from veterinarians in their district are asked to provide the completed form to ODH ZDP at 614-644-1057.

If your agency receives reports of algal blooms, these can be reported directly to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Division of Surface Water. Its HAB Report Form is available on OEPA's website below.

Please refer to the following links for more information regarding Harmful Algal Blooms:

BEH Blue-Green Algae Fact Sheet

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/ASSETS/BD5C8F3BBC9149AB815B1C6B57586866/Blue%20Green%20Algae%20HABs.pdf>

Ohio Department of Health Odors and Your Health Fact Sheet

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/ASSETS/64E05559F9AE4A3786CFC4EE9DCBE5E2/OdorsFS.pdf>

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Grand Lake St. Marys Harmful Algal Bloom Website

http://www.epa.ohio.gov/pic/gism_algae.aspx

Ohio Department of National Resources: Grand Lake St. Marys Frequently Asked Questions

<http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/tabid/21817/Default.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Environmental Hazards & Health Effects, Harmful Algal Blooms HABs

<http://www.cdc.gov/hab/cyanobacteria/facts.htm#treat>

Attachments:

- HAB-Related Human Illness Report Form
- HAB-Related Animal Illness Report Form
- Memo to Ohio veterinarians