Beware of the blue-green algae

Across Minnesota, the heat is on. As the dog days of summer approach, conditions are ripe for some of our lakes to produce cyanobacteria, better known as blue-green algae, which have the potential to be unsafe for pets and humans.

Blue-green algae blooms can occur on unhealthy lakes that are over-fertilized with nitrogen or phosphorus due to runoff from agriculture or septic systems. When there are excess nutrients in the water and the water temperature is high over a sustained period of time, these combined factors are the ideal breeding grounds for blue-green algae. Such high concentrations of excess nutrients can feed algal blooms and also increase the presence of blue-green algae, a toxic form of the blue-green algae.

Blue-green algae blooms can be a greenish-blue algae or may resemble pea soup. This picture captured the presence of blue-green algae in the Spring Lake outlet in Prior Lake on Aug. 13, 2012.

Blue-green algal blooms can vary in appearance, often resembling green paint or pea soup. This bloom can be unsafe for pets and humans.

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