

Media release

11 March 2016

Duck hunters urged to lookout for blue-green algae

Hunters participating in the upcoming duck hunting season are reminded to be on the lookout for blue-green algae as popular hunting areas may be affected this season.

Game Management Authority (GMA) CEO Greg Hyams said hunters should be aware that wetlands along the Murray Valley may be affected by blue-green algae, which should be avoided as it is potentially toxic and can be dangerous to both people and dogs if ingested.

“Blue-green algae blooms can be common at this time of the year as high water temperatures, high light intensity and little rainfall create the perfect environment for the algae to grow,” Mr Hyams said.

“The blooms may be visible across the water surface ranging in colour from dark-green to yellowish brown, and algae may be present on the water surface that can look like a green paint or thick scum.”

If you suspect water may be contaminated with blue green algae, make sure you take the following precautions:

- avoid wading, unless you are wearing undamaged waders
- do not consume the water, or let your dog consume the water
- do not eat the offal of any ducks taken from contaminated wetlands, or feed it to your dog
- do not allow your dog to submerge itself in the water and if it does, make sure you wash the dog thoroughly in clean water
- be aware that boiling algal water does not remove toxins from the water
- seek medical attention immediately if you think you are experiencing symptoms related to exposure to blue-green algae such as skin irritation and rashes, gastroenteritis, headache, fevers, muscle weakness, seizures and respiratory failure.

Mr Hyams said there is limited research in how ducks are affected by blue-green algae. However, hunters should be cautious as studies have shown that toxins can accumulate in the internal organs of fish and possibly ducks.

“As a precaution, hunters should discard the internal organs (particularly the liver) of ducks and rinse the duck with clean water prior to cooking and eating,” Mr Hyams said.

The 2016 duck hunting season will last 12 weeks, opening on Saturday 19 March and closing on Monday 13 June. The daily bag limit has been reduced to eight birds on the first day of the season and four birds per day for everyday thereafter. Also, the Blue-winged Shoveler must not be hunted in 2016.

Monthly reporting on significant blue-green algal blooms in Victorian waterways can be found at www.water.vic.gov.au

Details of the 2016 duck season will be regularly updated on the Game Management Authority (GMA) website www.gma.vic.gov.au

Media contact: Nick Foster 0417 293 365