

# Blue Green Algae

## Overview

High levels of blue-green algae have been detected in the following locations:

- Loddon River between the Cairn Curran Reservoir and Laanecoorie Reservoir.
- The River Murray between Lake Hume and Barham/Koondrook (including Lake Hume, Lake Mulwala and Lake Moodemere).
- Channels servicing the Murray Valley Irrigation Area, and parts of the Torrumbarry Irrigation Area (East of the Loddon River).
- Lake Boga and the Loddon River between Cairn Curran and Laanecoorie (inclusive).
- Town water supplies remain unaffected and safe for drinking or domestic use

## Situation Update

### Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (GWMWater)

- There are 10 towns who rely on water pumped from the Murray River that are on stage 4 water restrictions to preserve the existing water supplies that these communities have in tanks or town storages.
- The towns are Berriwillock, Chinkapook, Chillingollah, Culgoa, Lalbert, Manangatang, Nullawil, Sea Lake, Ultima, and Waitchie
- GWMWater advises supplies to these towns are secure and they will continue to make sure this is the case.
- Another 323 rural customers who rely on water pumped from the Murray in this area were affected by the pumps being turned off.

GWMWater advises that testing of Murray River water at Pental Island overnight (Tuesday), and again this morning (Wednesday), indicates what is expected to be a temporary reduction in the concentrations of Blue-Green Algae at that location on the river.

With this window of opportunity GWMWater intends to recommission the Pental Island pump and commence pushing water back through sections of the Northern Mallee Pipeline and Supply System 5 of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline.

Rural customers are advised to take the opportunity to fill their on farm supplies as the pumps could be turned off again at short notice should the concentration of Blue-Green Algae again increase above the trigger threshold.

Should this occur, GWMWater will endeavour to contact impacted customers via SMS where we have contact numbers and via regional media outlets and Social Media.

While GWMWater has been able to reverse pump from storages at Culgoa and Berriwillock to maintain an alternate supply to many rural properties supplied by the Pental Island system, there are instances where the system has been unable to deliver water to some properties particularly in the Cannie Ridge, Swan Hill and Sea Lake areas.

The exercise of reverse pumping on Supply System 5 has never been done before and has proven the flexibility of the system. This gives us added confidence that should the extended Algal Bloom coming down the river impact again we have an effective alternate supply to assist in securing the system for farmers and town residents.

Any rural customers who are presently without water for domestic household purposes should contact GWMWater on 1300 659 961 to arrange a delivery of up to 28,000 litres.

The readings at Nyah and Piangil remains below the threshold which would require them to be shut off. While these off-takes remain in operation, rural customers are reminded that they should keep their three (3) days on farm storages topped up and assume that these off-takes will be shut off at some stage in the coming days.

**GWM Water their rural customers to refrain from carting water supplies from the Ultima urban system until further notice. Customers are asked to take water from an alternative hydrant. The closest hydrant is located at Swan Hill.**

With a rural system shut down, we will offer to cart up to 28,000 L of water to rural customers for household use, upon request. This water will only be delivered into tanks which provide safe and easy access for water tankers.

Under these arrangements, and if required, farmers will need to source their own water for stock to supplement on farm supplies.

#### **Supply points for carting water:**

**All outlet sizes are 3" Cam lock fittings (female connection).**

**Ultima urban system - Please cease carting from this site until further notice. The hydrant at Swan Hill is the closest hydrant for this area.**

Area	Water Carting Supply Point
Manangatang/Piangil	Mallee Highway at the Daly Road and Crook Road crossroad (West of Manangatang)
Nyah/Eureka	Corner Sea Lake-Robinvale and Lake Wahpool Road (South of Chinkapook)
Sea Lake	Lascelles Pump Station (south of Lascelles township)
Berriwillock	Corner of Hopetoun-Woomelang Road and Woomelang South Road (West of Woomelang)
Culgoa and Nullawil	Mills Road off the Nullawil-Birchip Road (West of Nullawil)
Quambatook	McLean Road, Ninyeunook Road and Settlement Road junction
Lalbert/Dumosa	Dumosa Fire Station
Wycheproof	Cnr of Pellegrino's Road and Calder Highway, north of Wycheproof

GWMWater will continue to monitor the situation and will make updates through their website page [www.gwmwater.org.au](http://www.gwmwater.org.au)

## Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW)

- High levels of potentially toxic blue-green algae have been detected in the following areas and warnings are still current:
  - River Murray between Lake Hume and Barham / Koondrook (including in Lake Hume)
  - Murray Valley Irrigation Area (including in Torgannah Lagoon near Cobram)
  - Broken Creek
  - Nine Mile Creek
  - Lake Moodemere (near Rutherglen)
  - Parts of the Torrumbarry Irrigation Area (east of the Loddon River)
  - Loddon River from Cairn Curran Reservoir to Laanecoorie Reservoir (including in these reservoirs)
  - Lake Boga
- GMW is continuing to monitor the situation and is regularly undertaking water sampling.  
If you suspect high levels of blue-green algae in an area not affected by a current warning, phone the GMW blue-green algae hotline on 03 5826 3785

## **Weather and conditions**

- Isolated thunderstorms, particularly across the north could produce localised heavier falls, however it's unlikely there will be enough persistent rain to flush out the Blue Green Algae from waterways
- Humid conditions are set to last for another four days across Victoria, due to lack of cold fronts to push the muggy air away.

## **Safety messages**

- People and pets should not enter the water at locations affected by blue-green algae, and should not use the water for cooking, drinking, washing, washing clothes, showering, or watering fruit, vegetables and herbs in the garden.
- Boiling algae-affected water will not make it safe to drink, or to use for other purposes (e.g. irrigation or drinking water for stock).
- Treated town water supplies remain safe to drink. In some smaller communities lacking full treatment facilities alternative arrangements are being made.
- If you're not sure whether the water near you is affected, it is best to err on the safe side and avoid the water. Blue-green algae is not always visible, and does not always colour the water blue or green.

- Make sure children or teenagers in your care are aware of the danger and know to stay clear of the water. Children are more likely than adults to swallow water when swimming and more susceptible to health effects.
- For current warnings and information: [emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au) or [www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/water/blue-green-algae-cyanobacteria/blue-green-algae-and-health](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/water/blue-green-algae-cyanobacteria/blue-green-algae-and-health)
- Typical symptoms resulting from contact with algae include skin rashes or itchiness, sore eyes, ears or nose; or if swallowed, gastroenteritis symptoms including nausea, or vomiting or diarrhoea. If the algae is producing a toxin then drinking the water can cause severe health effects including liver or kidney damage and effects on the nervous system.
- People with concerns about their health should contact Nurse-On-Call on 1300 60 60 24.

## **Recreation**

- If you are boating or fishing on the river (or have a houseboat) take care to avoid any contact with the water.
- It is generally safe to eat fish caught in affected areas, but take care to rinse and clean the fish carefully in fresh water. Only eat the flesh of the fish and discard any internal organs (as the fish may have swallowed toxins). Do not eat mussels, crayfish or yabbies from the affected area.
- People who come into contact with affected water should wash it off immediately with clean, fresh water. Seek health advice if you have any health effects or symptoms after coming in contact with water.
- If you have recently used a wetsuit in these areas, and think it might be affected, rinse thoroughly to remove any traces of algae.

## **Tourism**

- While visitors are advised not to undertake any activity that involves direct skin contact with the water in the affected areas, there are many experiences on and along the river that can be still enjoyed, such as paddle-steamer cruises, boat cruising, golf, hiking and bushwalking, bike riding, events and festivals and wonderful food and wine experiences.
- Accredited visitor information centres in the region are a great source of advice on ways you can safely explore the best of the Murray region this autumn.
- Due to the changing weather conditions it is impossible to predict if and when the blue green algae will disperse.
- Industry mechanisms have been activated to provide timely and responsible advice for holidaymakers to ensure their safety and to allow them to keep on enjoying their visit.

## **Animals**

- Dogs can be poisoned by blue-green algae. Don't let your dog swim or drink the water in affected areas. If it does come into contact with the water, it is important to wash them thoroughly with fresh water, as they can ingest toxins by licking their coat.

## **Primary producers**

- Irrigators and livestock managers need to be alert to avoid contaminating produce and livestock being poisoned, due to the recent warning in regards to water supplies being contaminated with blue green algae.
- Toxic blue-green algal blooms have the potential to kill stock and can lead to production losses. Livestock are at real risk of poisoning by blue-green algae and producers are advised to access alternative stock water supplies and avoid grazing pastures that have been irrigated using affected water.
- Irrigation water contaminated with blue-green algae should not be spray irrigated on vegetables and fruit, or come in contact with plants being grown for food. This is particularly important for fruit and vegetables that are likely to be eaten raw such as apples, grapes, tomatoes, strawberries, cabbages, lettuce and other salad greens.
- For further information: [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/algae](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/algae)

## **About blue-green algae**

- Blue-green algae occur naturally, but at high levels can be dangerous to humans and animals, especially if toxins are being produced.
- Algal blooms can be triggered by nutrient levels, low inflows, lower storage volumes and warmer weather conditions