

Sunraysia Regional Algal Coordinating Committee

11 January 2019

Red alert issued for blue-green algae in the Murray River – Mildura

The Sunraysia Regional Algal Coordinating Committee today issued a red alert (high alert) warning for blue-green algae in the Murray River at the Mildura Weir pool from the Lock 11 to the Chaffey Bridge including the Marina.

This declaration of a red alert in this section of the river follows extensive testing undertaken by local water authorities. Levels of blue green algae in other sections of the river in the Mildura and Wentworth weir pools continue to fluctuate.

These red alert level warnings indicated that people should not undertake recreational activities where they may be coming into direct contact with the water such as swimming, as well as domestic uses including showering and washing. Contact with the water may also pose a threat to livestock and pets.

Warning signs are being positioned at key recreational areas and will remain in place while high levels of blue-green algae are present.

The species of blue-green algae identified are potentially toxic and different to what was seen during the 2016 event in the Murray River. If consumed blue-green algae may cause gastroenteritis in humans and skin and eye irritations after contact. Boiling the water does not remove algal toxins.

People are advised not to enter the water, not to drink untreated water or bathe in water drawn from the river while this red alert level warning is in place.

Appropriate water treatment is in place by the respective local water utilities and reticulated town water supplies remain unaffected and safe to drink.

Livestock owners are reminded to continue to check stock water supplies for blue-green algae and to remove stock from foreshores where surface scum is visible or blue-green algae are suspected.

If it is not feasible to relocate stock, it is suggested that where stock water is piped, foot valves or inlet pipes be moved as far down under the water surface as possible, where concentrations tend to be lower, as this may reduce the level of algae pumped through to stock troughs.

Landholders are advised to keep a close eye on their stock for signs of potential algae induced symptoms and if needed. Relocate stock to other water points not linked to the same water source with shade provided.

Blue-green algae usually appear as green paint-like scums on the water, near the edges, or as greenish clumps throughout the water. It makes the water appear dirty, green or discoloured and generally has a strong musty or earthy odour.

People should not eat mussels or crayfish from red level warning areas. Any fish caught should be cleaned and washed thoroughly in uncontaminated water and any internal organs disposed of before consumption.

Blue-green algae occur naturally and can reproduce quickly in favourable conditions where there is still or slow-flowing water, abundant sunlight and sufficient levels of nutrients.

It is not possible to predict how long the algae will remain at high levels. Regular monitoring will continue and the alert will be lifted as soon as the high levels of algae dissipate.

Information for landholders regarding stock and crops can be found here:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/irrigation/quality/pubs-and-info/blue-green-algae>

Information on health impacts can be found here:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/water/Pages/water-recreational.aspx>

Information updates about blue-green algae blooms and red level warning areas can be obtained from the Regional Algal Coordinating Committee freecall Algal Information Hotline on **1800 999 457** or visit – www.water.nsw.gov.au

ENDS