

Media Release

Blue-green algae Red Alert for Barwon River at Brewarrina

3 December 2018

A red alert level warning (high alert) for potentially toxic blue-green algae has been issued for the Barwon River at Brewarrina.

A red alert level warning indicates that people should not undertake recreational activities where they may come into direct contact with the water. Contact with the water may also pose a threat to livestock, pets and domestic users that pump directly from the river.

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. **Boiling the water does not remove algal toxins.**

The Brewarrina weir pool extends approximately 45km upstream, water users of this water should apply caution and follow the recommendation imposed by the Red Alert. People camping along this section of the Barwon River are urged not to use the water sourced from the river.

It is recommended that alternate water supplies be provided for stock, as the algae species detected is known to be potentially toxic.

Town water supplies remain unaffected and safe to drink. However, the township of Brewarrina has a dual water system in place, **water sourced from the garden taps may have toxic algae present**, it is advisable not use this water for pets or for recreation purposes.

People should not eat mussels or crayfish from red alert 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 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.

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.

People who believe they may have been affected by blue-green algae are advised to seek medical advice.

Updates about blue-green algae blooms and red level warning areas can be obtained by calling **1800 999 457** or visiting – <http://www.waternsw.com.au/water-quality/algae>

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