Update for Algal Toxins in Driskels Lake, Cass County

Hartford, MI -- The Van Buren/Cass District Health Department, working in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), is issuing an update to the July 1st public health advisory regarding algal toxins that were found in Driskels Lake in Cass County. The Van Buren/Cass District Health Department received results on August 21 from tests taken on August 4th which were non-detect for anatoxin. MDHHS has issued the following statement “It is possible that blooms of filamentous green algae could appear again and based on what we know at this time, it’s possible that it would be sequestering cyanobacteria and toxins. Residents should remain cautious with themselves, children, and pets about contact with algae in the lake”.

Anatoxin-a was detected by the MDHHS laboratory in samples from Driskels Lake taken on June 19, June 26, and July 1. This is one of the algal toxins that cyanobacteria, or Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), can produce. Animals, including dogs, are especially at risk of developing health effects. This is because dogs are more likely than humans to be exposed to the toxins because they drink lake water and lick lake water from their fur. Symptoms of exposure in dogs can include lethargy, difficulty breathing and walking, and seizures. This toxin has been associated with dog deaths in other lakes.

At this time, MDHHS and the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department are not recommending any future water testing. Anyone using Driskels Lake should assume that the toxins could be present in any area with algae and aquatic plants and continue to avoid those areas.

If people may have had contact with or swallowed water and feel sick, they should consult with their doctor or Poison Control at 800-222-1222. If symptoms are severe, people should get emergency medical attention. If animals become sick after contact with lake water, contact your veterinarian immediately.

More information on harmful algal blooms can be found at www.michigan.gov/habs and www.vbcassdhd.org.

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