

# Healthwise

## Swimming in Toxic Water

On Monday, June 25, 2007 I took my healthy 9 month old Border Collie Vita swimming at approximately 6:30 p.m. Vita and two other BC's spent about an hour and a half diving off the dock, chasing the Water Kong, and running around. The temperature that day was just over 90 degrees, but none of the dogs looked particularly winded or hot. Vita emerged from the water and looked as if she was going to vomit. She threw up lake water three times. I wasn't particularly concerned as she took in a lot of water from retrieving and swimming so much and had seen other dogs do that in the past without complications. After the third time throwing up, she lay down and closed her eyes. Her tongue was hanging out of her mouth and I began to suspect she may have heat stroke. I immediately placed ice on her stomach and checked her gums. They were pink. I took her temperature which was 101.9, still normal. I then called my Vet who said these conditions did not indicate heat stroke and said I needed to get emergency medical attention right away. Vita was not responsive and when I picked her up to put her in the car she was limp and her eyes were still closed. Her breathing was slow and her heart was racing. I arrived at the emergency clinic only a half hour from the time she showed signs of distress. The ER Vet asked me what sorts of things Vita had been doing all day. I explained that she was crated as I was gone for the latter part of the afternoon and that upon coming home, the only other place she went was to the lake. Vita's eyes were fixed and dilated and the Vet suggested there was already brain damage. After administering an IV and oxygen, the Vet called me in and said Vita was not responding and that it appeared that she was suffering from some kind of toxic poisoning. Her heart rate was 200. He mentioned that he had recently seen a couple of dogs who died from Blue Green Algae Toxicity. I told him that the lake had what appeared to be algae blooms on the surface of the water. Neither of the other two dogs showed any of the signs that Vita had and that nei-

ther dog took in as much water as Vita apparently did. We decided to put her on a ventilator overnight and give her a "chance" to pull through.

When I got home I did a Dogpile.com search of "Blue Green Algae Toxicity in Dogs" and found some very disturbing information.

-Blooms can occur at any time, but most often occur in late summer or early fall. They can occur in marine, estuarine, and fresh waters, but the blooms of greatest concern are the ones that occur in fresh water, such as drinking water reservoirs or recreational waters.

-Some cyanobacterial blooms can look like foam, scum, or mats on the surface of fresh water lakes and ponds. The blooms can be blue, bright green, brown, or red and may look like paint floating on the water. Some blooms may not affect the appearance of the water. As algae in a cyanobacterial bloom die, the water may smell bad.

-Some cyanobacteria that can form CyanoHABs (Harmful Algal Blooms) produce toxins that are among the most powerful natural poisons known. These toxins have no known antidotes.

-Swallowing water that has cyanobacterial toxins in it can cause acute, severe gastroenteritis (including diarrhea and vomiting).

-Liver toxicity (i.e., increased serum levels of liver enzymes). Symptoms of liver poisoning may take hours or days to show up in people or animals. Symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhea, and vomiting.

-Kidney toxicity.

-Neurotoxicity. These symptoms can appear within 15 to 20 minutes after exposure. In dogs, the neurotoxins can cause salivation and other neurologic symptoms, including weakness, staggering, difficulty breathing, convulsions, and death. People may have numb lips, tingling fingers and toes, or they may feel dizzy.

Vita had indeed exhibited salivation and signs of weakness, staggering, difficulty breathing and vomiting. At 7:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 26, 2007 I called the Vet and was told that they

took Vita off the ventilator a couple of times during the night and that she was not breathing on her own. I told him to discontinue the procedure and to let her go. I called the DNR here in Michigan and was told that Blue Green Algae didn't usually appear this time of year and I told the agent that the conditions were that of late summer in Michigan, very hot for the last two days and reminded him that Blue Green Algae can appear at any time. He told me not to panic or to alarm other people. I told him that had someone else panicked, we wouldn't be having this conversation right now. Later that morning I found out from a neighbor that her two young boys had vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramps last week and her Doctor suggested she bring in a water sample. I do not know if she did or not. I also talked to a woman from a neighboring county whose neighbor's dog ingested a lot of water from a pond and died suddenly a couple weeks ago. As of this writing, Wednesday, June 27th, I have not heard anything from Michigan State where I took Vita for a necropsy and toxicological panel. For the time being, I would strongly suggest you watch your dogs when swimming in small lakes and ponds as the potential threat of toxic poisoning from Blue Green Algae is prevalent. Had I known that algae of any kind was toxic, you can be sure my dogs wouldn't be swimming anywhere and that Vita, whose name quite ironically meant "life" in Latin, would be alive today.

*Missing you more than you can imagine.*

*May you rest in peace, Red Top Vita*

*09/05/06 - 06/26/07*

*Bob Tatus  
Fenton, MI*





# A Letter from a Dog - "How Could You?"

By: PetPlace.com Dog Lover



**"How could you?"**

When I was a puppy, I entertained you with my antics and made you laugh. You called me your child, and despite a number of chewed shoes and a couple of murdered throw pillows, I became your best friend. Whenever I was "bad," you'd shake your finger at me and ask "How could you?"...but then you'd relent and roll me over for a belly rub.

My housebreaking took a little longer than expected, because you were terribly busy, but we worked on that together. I remember those nights of nuzzling you in bed and listening to your confidences and secret dreams, and I believed that life could not be any more perfect.

We went for long walks and runs in the park, car rides, stops for ice cream (I only got the cone because "ice cream is bad for dogs" you said), and I took long naps in the sun waiting for you to come home at the end of the day.

Gradually, you began spending more time at work and on your career, and more time searching for a human mate. I waited for you patiently, comforted you through heartbreaks and disappointments, never chided you about bad decisions, and romped with glee at your homecomings, and when you fell in love. She, now your wife, is not a "dog person", still I welcomed her into our home, tried to show her affection, and obeyed her. I was happy because you were happy.

Then the human babies came along and I shared your excitement. I was fascinated by their pinkness, how they

smelled, and I wanted to mother them, too. Only she and you worried that I might hurt them, and I spent most of my time banished to another room, or to a dog crate. Oh, how I wanted to love them, but I became a "prisoner of love." As they began to grow, I became their friend. They clung to my fur and pulled themselves up on wobbly legs, poked fingers in my eyes, investigated my ears, and gave me kisses on my nose. I loved everything about them and their touch-because your touch was now so infrequent-and I would've defended them with my life if need be. I would sneak into their beds and listen to their worries and secret dreams, and together we waited for the sound of your car in the driveway.

There had been a time, when others asked you if you had a dog, that you produced a photo of me from your wallet and told them stories about me. These past few years, you just answered "yes" and changed the subject. I had gone from being "your dog" to "just a dog," and you resented every expenditure on my behalf.

Now, you have a new career opportunity in another city, and you and they will be moving to an apartment that does not allow pets. You've made the right decision for your "family," but there was a time when I was your only family. I was excited about the car ride until we arrived at the animal shelter. It smelled of dogs and cats, of fear, of hopelessness. You filled out the paperwork and said "I know you will find a good home for her." They shrugged and gave you a pained look. They understand the realities facing a middle-aged dog, even one with "papers." You had to pry your son's fingers loose from my collar as he screamed "No, Daddy! Please don't let them take my dog!" And I worried for him, and what lessons you had just taught him about friendship and loyalty, about love and responsibility, and about respect for all life.

You gave me a good-bye pat on the

head, avoided my eyes, and politely refused to take my collar and leash with you. You had a deadline to meet and now I have one, too. After you left, the two nice ladies said you probably knew about your upcoming move months ago and made no attempt to find me another good home. They shook their heads and asked "How could you?" They are as attentive to us here in the shelter as their busy schedules allow. They feed us, of course, but I lost my appetite days ago. At first, whenever anyone passed my pen, I rushed to the front, hoping it was you that you had changed your mind-that this was all a bad dream...or I hoped it would at least be someone who cared, anyone who might save me.

When I realized I could not compete with the frolicking for attention of happy puppies, oblivious to their own fate, I retreated to a far corner and waited. I heard her footsteps as she came for me at the end of the day, and I padded along the aisle after her to a separate room. A blissfully quiet room. She placed me on the table and rubbed my ears, and told me not to worry. My heart pounded in anticipation of what was to come, but there was also a sense of relief. As is my nature, I was more concerned about her. The burden which she bears weighs heavily on her, and I know that, the same way I knew your every mood. She gently placed a tourniquet around my foreleg as a tear ran down her cheek. I licked her hand in the same way I used to comfort you so many years ago. She expertly slid the hypodermic needle into my vein. As I felt the sting and the cool liquid coursing through my body, I lay down sleepily, looked into her kind eyes and murmured "How could you?" Perhaps because she understood my dogspeak, she said "I'm so sorry." She hugged me, and hurriedly explained it was her job to make sure I went to a better place, where I wouldn't be ignored or abused or abandoned, or have to fend for myself-a place of love and light so very different from this earthly place.