

ANIMAL HEALTH ALERT

Veterinary Public Health | (213) 288-7060 | vet@ph.lacounty.gov | <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/>



Animal Health Alert for Veterinarians: Testing criteria for unexplained illness affecting multiple dogs in the Venice Canals area 8.15.2025

Key Points:

- The Veterinary Public Health Program (VPH) is continuing to investigate reports of unexplained, acute onset, severe illness in multiple dogs in the Venice Canals neighborhood.
- Testing of the canal water, algae and scum by the California Water Boards has detected the presence of algal toxins: microcystins, anatoxin-a and cylindrospermopsin, however no definitive link between these algal toxins and the dog illnesses has been established.
- **Veterinarians are requested to collect and hold specimens from dogs that meet the following criteria:**
 - Dog has exposure history of living in, walking through, or visiting the Venice Canals area within the 14 days prior to illness onset **AND**
 - Dog presents with acute onset of one or more of the following clinical signs: seizures or tremors, ataxia, difficulty breathing, sudden collapse, disorientation or confusion, significant bloody diarrhea, and severe, intractable vomiting – in the absence of an alternative diagnosis.
- Additional testing and necropsy may be available for cases meeting the above criteria. Guidance for samples to collect from potential cases is listed below.
- [REPORT suspected cases](#) to VPH at vet@ph.lacounty.gov, or call: 213-288-7060 (Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm).

Dear Veterinary Colleagues:

The Veterinary Public Health Program (VPH) of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC-DPH) continues to investigate reports of unexplained, acute onset, severe illness in multiple dogs in the Venice Canals neighborhood. As of today, there have been 27 probable and possible canine cases identified, including five canine deaths, with the most recent case presenting with clinical signs on July 30, 2025.

Preliminary environmental findings from testing of the canal water, algae, and scum, by partner agencies detected the presence of algal toxins: microcystins, anatoxin-a and cylindrospermopsin. Please see [California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment \(OEHHA\)'s Veterinarian's Reference](#) for additional information on these toxins. A definitive link between these algal toxins and the dog illnesses is not confirmed; the source of the dog illnesses remains undetermined at this time.

Veterinarians in LA County are requested to collect and hold specimens from dogs that meet the following criteria:

- Dog has exposure history of living in, walking through, or visiting the Venice Canals area within the 14 days prior to illness onset, **AND**
- Dog presents with acute onset of one or more of the following clinical signs: seizures or tremors, ataxia, difficulty breathing, sudden collapse, disorientation or confusion, significant bloody diarrhea, and severe, intractable vomiting – in the absence of an alternative diagnosis.

Specimen	Container	Storage
Urine*	Sealed container	Freezer
Vomit/stomach contents*	Sealed container	Refrigerator
Serum (separated)*	Red top tube (RTT) or no additive tube	Freezer
Liver or kidney tissue samples from necropsy*	Sealed container. Do not add formalin, saline, or alcohol.	Freezer
Euthanized or deceased patients for necropsy*	-----	Refrigerator
Whole blood	Lavender top tube (LTT)	Refrigerator
*Preferred specimens		

Collect a detailed history including:

- Recent travel history and location of walking routes and public areas visited
- Any dietary indiscretion, especially on walks or in public access spaces
- Potential exposure to pesticides, rodenticides or snail/slug bait
- Exposures to canals, ingestion of standing water or from communal water bowls

Client education

- Do not allow pets to enter or drink the canal water
- Do not allow pets to ingest, touch, or sniff algae, scum, or any debris near the canal water

REPORT all cases meeting the above criteria to VPH

- Let us know which specimens have been collected
- Use the [Animal Disease Reporting Form](#) which can be submitted via email to vet@ph.lacounty.gov or call 213-288-7060 (Monday—Friday, 8 AM—5 PM)
- Please note that we will be reaching out to your client with additional questions.

Select Resources:

- State of California – Water Quality Monitoring Council - [Harmful Algal Blooms \(HABs\) Fact Sheet for Veterinarians](#)
- State of California – Water Quality Monitoring Council – [FAQs for Pets, Livestock & Harmful Algal Blooms \(HABs\)](#)
- California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) – [Marine Harmful Algal Bloom \(HAB\)-Related Illness Tracking](#)
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – [Harmful Algal Bloom \(HAB\)-Associated Illness](#)
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – [Animal Safety Alert – Cyanobacterial blooms](#)

Sincerely,

Veterinary Public Health
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
(213) 288-7060
vet@ph.lacounty.gov
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/>

Please email vet@ph.lacounty.gov if you wish to unsubscribe or need other AHAN-related assistance. To [sign up for future Animal Health Alerts](#) or to view [previously released AHANs](#).