



## Blue-green algae

**Blue-green algae (BGA) are a type of bacteria known as Cyanobacteria. BGA are a natural part of the freshwater environment. They are found in rivers and dams as well as irrigation channels and backyard pools. Low levels of BGA are present in freshwater all the time. However, when conditions are favourable BGA can reproduce at very high rates, doubling in volume overnight. BGA can form 'blooms' which sometimes produce a toxic scum.**

### Monitoring for BGA

Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) has a proactive BGA monitoring program that meets the recommendations of the Murrumbidgee Regional Algal Coordinating Committee (RACC).

Samples are collected weekly from key monitoring sites and sent to a laboratory for analysis. The results of the analysis are published on our website in the *Water Quality* section. BGA levels can change significantly over short periods of time, particularly when temperatures increase and water movement is minimal. Because of this, sample results can only ever be considered an indication of BGA levels.

### Alert levels

There are currently no guidelines for irrigation water use. The NSW Department of Primary Industries publishes guidelines on water use suitability when BGA are present. There are four alert levels:

- 1. GREEN ALERT:** Low levels of BGA detected. Not considered a risk for human contact or stock consumption.
- 2. AMBER ALERT:** Levels of BGA increasing. Not generally a risk for human contact or stock consumption.
- 3. STOCK ALERT:** Elevated levels of BGA detected. Not suitable for stock use.
- 4. RED ALERT:** High levels of BGA detected. Not suitable for stock use or human contact.

**NOTE: water provided by MI is Non-potable - ie not for human consumption as drinking water or related products (eg ice). Potable water (eg town supply) has been treated to remove pathogens including bacteria.**

When a stock or red alert is triggered, the results are published on our website. Where possible, MI will issue SMS notifications to customers downstream of the detection points. The alert will be lifted when two consecutive samples are below the alert threshold.

### Managing BGA

It is not possible to eradicate BGA from our supply network. However, we do take steps to minimise the likelihood and duration of BGA blooms, which may include operational changes. We are also participating in research trials seeking to reduce or remove blooms once they happen.



### Further Information on BGA

A range of information including fact sheets on BGA can be found on the Department of Primary Industries' Web site: [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/resources/water/quality/publications/blue-green-algae](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/resources/water/quality/publications/blue-green-algae).