

Lake Michigan Property Owners

Botulism is a disease caused by toxins produced by *Clostridium botulinum*, a common, ubiquitous bacterium. Type E botulism has been associated with wildlife die-offs (water birds) on the Great Lakes. Animals (including pets) and humans can become sick when they ingest the toxin, usually by eating a contaminated fish or bird. Your pets should not be allowed access to carcasses of dead fish or birds as these animals may have died from Type E Botulism and the toxin could still be present in the carcass. It may be necessary to have your pet on a leash in areas where bird or fish die-offs are occurring. No type E botulism illnesses have been associated with swimming along the lakeshore where fish and bird die-offs have occurred.

Property owners can collect and dispose of fish and bird carcasses* but some precautions should be taken prior to participating in the activity.

1. Bird carcasses should not be handled with bare hands. Wear gloves or use a garbage bag over your hand to collect carcasses.
2. The avian carcasses should be placed in garbage bags – the number of birds/bag will depend on the size of the birds and the quality of the garbage bags used. Bags should be tied closed.
3. Carcasses can be disposed of either by including them with your household trash or by burying them. If you are burying the carcasses you need to do so away from the shoreline, remove them from the garbage bag(s), and bury them at least 2 feet deep. Burying them to this depth will discourage other animals from unearthing them. Do not compost.
4. Property owners may bury animals on their own land. Dead birds should not be removed from another landowner's property without permission. If dead birds are found on state or federally owned lands contact the respective agency's local personnel.
5. Once you finish handling carcasses, dispose of your gloves in a garbage bag and place them in the trash to go to a landfill.

*Birds found bearing a band should be reported using the contact information printed on the band.

6. Citizens should contact one of the individuals on the Northern Lake Michigan Botulism contact list below. If unable to do this, the nearest DNR Wildlife Office should be contacted and arrangements made to deliver the specimens to the office. It may be possible for DNR personnel to pick up specimens, but it may be necessary to deliver them. DNR field personnel will forward the specimens to the DNR wildlife Disease Lab in Lansing for necropsy and botulism testing.

NORTHERN LAKE MICHIGAN BOTULISM CONTACT LIST

COUNTY COORDINATOR	COUNTIES	PHONE
Mark Breederland	Benzie Leelanau	231-922-4628
Peg Comfort	Antrim	231-676-0566
Kevin Cronk	Alpena Charlevoix Cheboygan Emmet Presque Isle	231-347-1181 x 109

Joe Kaplan	Delta Mackinac Menominee Schoolcraft	906-487-9060
John Nelson	Grand Traverse	231-935-1514

