



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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BOTULISM POISONING OF DUCKS REPORTED IN CANADA

Thousands of ducks are reported to be sick or dead from botulism at Whitewater Lake, Manitoba, Canada. Studies carried on by the Manitoba Game Branch and the Fish and Wildlife Service indicate severe losses already and that unless conditions change markedly within the next few weeks the losses at Whitewater Lake may exceed 50,000 ducks this year.

Outbreaks of botulism have also been reported at Oak Lake, Manitoba, and Hay Lake, Alberta. Few outbreaks of botulism have been reported as yet in the United States.

Botulism, or duck poisoning, usually occurs in shallow alkaline sump lakes with an exposed, nearly flat lake bottom as a shoreline. Fluctuating water levels -- causing lake vegetation and animal life to die and decay -- creates a condition favorable to the growth of botulism bacteria, which in turn creates a poisonous toxin.

Botulism outbreaks are most frequent on Alkalene lakes in western areas.

Experiments in botulism control have been underway at Bear River Refuge, Utah for many years. The Service is preparing a summary of these experiments which will be distributed to interested conservationists and agencies.

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