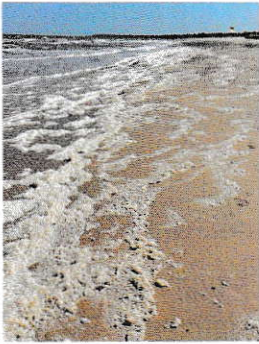


A guide to commonly reported pollution at bathing waters which are not sewage.

Foam on beaches

Often caused by natural algae (probably *Phaeocystis* or *Noctiluca*) stirred up by the waves potentially after an offshore algal bloom – regularly reported as sewage foam. Most frequently seen in spring/summer and dependant on weather and tide conditions.



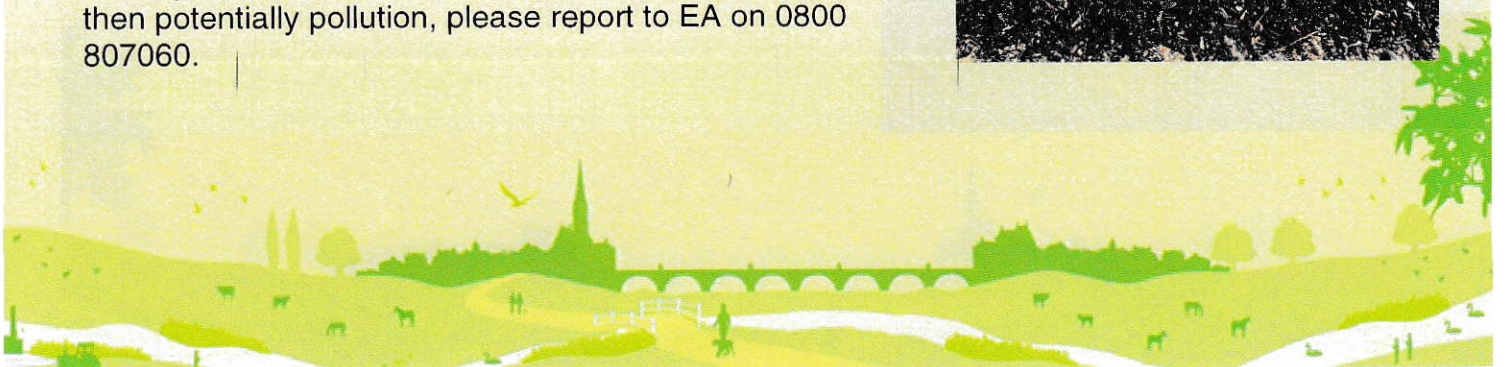
Bleached Algae mistaken for sewage litter - bleached sea lettuce and *Enteromorpha* (a type of algae) reported as toilet tissue.



Beach benthos

Shells of razor clams, detritus from the bottom of the sea is washed up often on high tides or during storms. NB if many dead crustaceans e.g. starfish could be various causes including Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning.

If many dead fish of just a few species in one area only could be bycatch (unwanted fish collected by trawler).
If many species of fish or shellfish or over many beaches, then potentially pollution, please report to EA on 0800 807060.



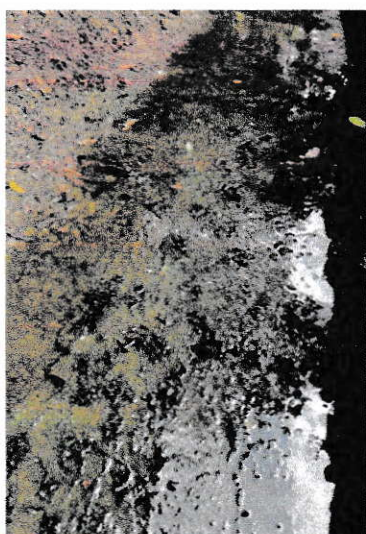
Algal Sloughing (river sites) – often reported as sewage floating on top of the water.

The term 'sloughing' can be used to describe brown scum formation which is often mistaken for sewage or slurry pollution. It can look like floating mass of frothy scum floating on the surface, often collecting debris from the river as it floats along.

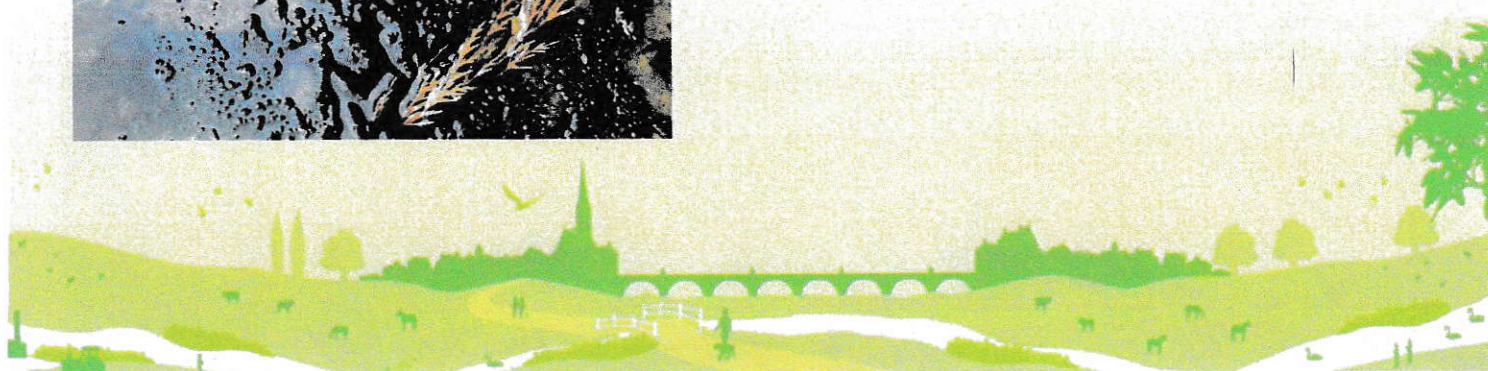
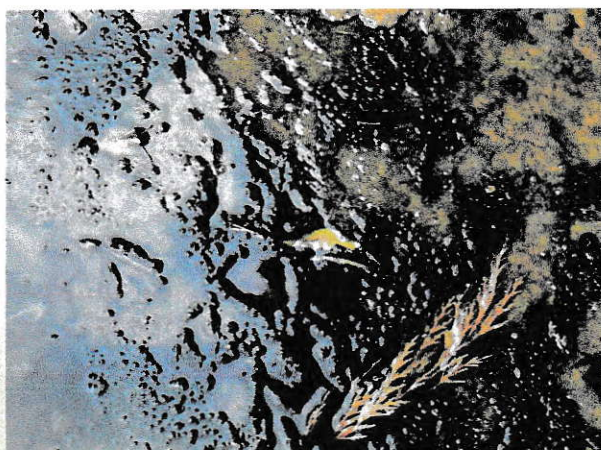
During warm sunny spells photosynthesis causes tiny oxygen bubbles to form on algae on the bottom of the river which act as a buoyancy aid causing the silt and algae to rise to the surface.

Whilst it may not look pleasant, clumps of algae are usually harmless. The oxygen levels are not normally affected, and we often find the levels are high due to the sunlight and photosynthesis. The scum will disappear naturally over time.

If unsure whether what you can see is sewage, look for sewage rag (sanitary towels, ear buds or toilet paper – and note any sewage odours. If sewage, please report to EA.



Algae mats



Bathing waters – examples of non-sewage pollutants

Cyanobacteria – blue-green algal bloom – More often in lakes and still waters but can be in rivers and sea (rare). EA can sample and will report through results to other organisations/owners.



An algal bloom of blue-green algae can be harmful to humans and animals so signs warning against swimming should be put out by the beach/river riparian owner asap.

N.B. duckweed and filamentous algae are often mistaken for cyanobacteria.

Palm oil deposits on beaches – white/yellowy waxy lumps – can be from large to pea sized along the strandline. Can smell rancid/of diesel. District Council/beach owner may put out warning signs.

Palm oil is transported on ships and can be legally released 12 miles out at sea. It can become contaminated with other waste products whilst in the ship and the smell is attractive to some animals, especially dogs who can become extremely ill after encountering it or eating it.

If a dog has eaten palm oil they should be taken to a vet ideally within 30 minutes.



If you see anything that you think is water pollution, please report as promptly as possible to the Environment Agency on 0800 807060 (24hr call centre). It is very helpful if you have photos and a clear description of the exact location, what was seen and details like the extent, state of the tide etc.

