

Micro-organisms causing elephant deaths

Toxins in water, produced by bacteria, have killed hundreds of elephants in Botswana since March. Toxic cyanobacteria are occurring more frequently as climate change drives up global temperatures

African elephant



Okavango Delta: At least 330 elephant deaths confirmed since March. Delta is home to estimated 15,000 elephants



■ **Cyanobacteria:** Micro-organisms, sometimes called **blue-green algae**. Five types of cyanobacteria can produce toxins that damage liver and nervous system of animals and humans

■ **Algal blooms:** When cyanobacteria multiply, they create blooms that spread across water and discolour it. Fertilisers used by farmers can encourage blooms to form. Remains of some 230 elephants have been found near watering holes

■ **Climate change:** Many cyanobacteria favour warmer water temperatures, which scientists say are occurring more frequently. Southern Africa's temperatures are rising at twice global average

■ **Eradication:** There is no simple solution to get rid of cyanobacterial blooms once they form. Elephant deaths stopped towards end of June, coinciding with the drying of pans, or watering holes