



Always consult with a veterinarian that you feel comfortable with before diagnosing or treating any disease on your own. This information is for reference only.

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Gastric Torsion

Issue Description

In dogs, gas accumulation in the stomach may cause or be caused by a volvulus, or twisting, of the stomach, which prevents gas from escaping. Deep-chested breeds are especially at risk.

Other Names

Bloat, Torsion, Gastric Dilatation-volvulus, GDV

Causes

The exact cause of bloat is still unknown. Generally, it is believed that excessive eating and drinking of water followed by exercise can cause bloat. It is thought that exercise causes food or fluid in the stomach to cause a build up of gas. The severity of the conditions is more serious when the stomach twists upon itself within the abdomen in a clockwise rotation causing the inlet and outlet of the stomach as well as blood vessels which supply the stomach to become constricted at both ends. As a result, the constriction will cause the stomach tissue to die. In a very short time, the stomach becomes restricted of nutrients and oxygen. If not treated, the dog can die.

Types Of Bloat

Gastric Dilatation - is simply the expansion of the stomach due to the buildup of gas or material in the stomach.

Gastric Volvulus (Torsion) - is the condition where the stomach rotates (flips on its long axis) and thereby twists the esophagus and small intestine closed so there is no passage of stomach contents or gas in or out of the stomach.

Breeds Prone To Bloat

Bloat seems to affect deep-chested, large or extra large dogs between the ages of 4 to 10 years.

- German Shepherd
- Great Dane
- Standard Poodle
- Rottweiler
- Akita
- Bloodhound
- Great Pyrenees
- Irish Setter
- Old English Sheepdog
- Boxer
- Golden Retriever
- Irish Wolfhound
- St. Bernards
- Labrador Retriever
- Newfoundland
- Doberman

Symptoms

There are many injuries and physical disorders which represent life-threatening emergencies. There is only one

condition so drastic that it over shadows them all in terms of rapidity of consequences and effort in emergency treatment. This is the gastric dilatation and volvulus – the "bloat."

- Paces around continuously, or, lies down in odd places
- Salivating, panting, whining
- Acts as if he can't get comfortable
- Acts agitated
- Unproductive vomiting or retching (the dog may produce frothy foamy vomit in small quantities)
- Excessive drooling, usually accompanied by retching noises
- Swelling in abdominal area (may or may not be noticeable)

If you see ANY combination of these symptoms, CALL YOUR VET and get the dog there as fast as possible.

Diagnosis

Initial diagnosis may include x-rays, an ECG, and blood tests, but treatment will probably be started before the test results are in.

Treatment

GDV is a true emergency. If you know or even suspect your dog has bloat, immediately call your veterinarian or emergency service. Do not attempt home treatment. While you are transporting the dog, the hospital staff can prepare for your arrival. Do not insist on accompanying your dog to the treatment area. Well-meaning owners are an impediment to efficient care. Someone will be out to answer your questions as soon as possible, but for now, have faith in your veterinarian and wait.

The first step is to treat shock with IV fluids and steroids. Antibiotics and anti-arrhythmics may also be started now. Then the veterinarian will attempt to decompress the stomach by passing a stomach tube. If this is successful, a gastric lavage may be instituted to wash out accumulated food, gastric juices, or other stomach contents. In some cases, decompression is accomplished by placing large-bore needles or a trochar through the skin and muscle and directly into the stomach.

In some cases, this medical therapy is sufficient. However, in many cases, surgery is required to save the dog. Once the dog's condition is stabilized, surgery to correct the stomach twist, remove any unhealthy tissue, and anchor the stomach in place is performed. The gastropexy, or anchoring surgery, is an important procedure to prevent recurrence, and many variations exist. Your veterinarian will do the procedure he feels comfortable with and which has the best success rate.

Recovery is prolonged, sometimes requiring hospital stays of a week or more. Post-operative care depends on the severity of the disease and the treatment methods employed and may include a special diet, drugs to promote gastric emptying, and routine wound management.

Suggestions For Bloat Prevention

- Avoid highly stressful situations. If you can't avoid them, try to minimize the stress as much as possible. It can be brought on by dog shows, mating, whelping, boarding, new dog in household, change in routine, etc.
- Do not use an elevated food bowl
- Do not exercise for at least an hour (longer if possible) before and especially after eating.
- Particularly avoid vigorous exercise and don't permit your dog to roll over, which could cause the stomach to twist.
- Do not permit rapid eating
- Feed 2 or 3 meals daily, instead of just one.
- Do not give water one hour before or after a meal. It dilutes the gastric juices necessary for proper digestion, which leads to gas production.
- Always keep a product with simethicone (e.g., Mylanta Gas (not regular Mylanta), Phazyme, Gas-X, etc.) on hand to treat gas symptoms. Some recommend giving your dog simethicone immediately if your dog burps more than once or shows other signs of gas. Some report relief of gas symptoms with 1/2 tsp of nutmeg or the homeopathic remedy Nux moschata 30.
- Allow access to fresh water at all times, except before and after meals
- Make meals a peaceful, stress-free time.

- When switching dog food, do so gradually (allow several weeks).
- Do not feed dry food exclusively.
- Feed a high-protein (>30%) diet, particularly of raw meat.
- If feeding dry food, avoid foods that contain fat as one of the first four ingredients.
- If feeding dry foods, avoid foods that contain citric acid. If you must use a dry food containing citric acid, do not pre-moisten the food.
- If feeding dry food, select one that includes rendered meat meal with bone product among the first four ingredients.
- Reduce carbohydrates as much as possible (e.g., typical in many commercial dog biscuits).
- Feed a high-quality diet. Whole, unprocessed foods are especially beneficial.
- Feed adequate amount of fiber (for commercial dog food, at least 3.00% crude fiber).
- Add an enzyme product to food (e.g., Prozyme).
- Include herbs specially mixed for pets that reduce gas (e.g., N.R. Special Blend).
- Avoid brewer's yeast, alfalfa, and soybean products.
- Promote an acidic environment in the intestine.
- Promote "friendly" bacteria in the intestine, e.g. from yogurt or supplemental acidophilus. This avoids fermentation of carbohydrates, which can cause gas quickly. This is especially a concern when antibiotics are given since they tend to reduce levels of "friendly" bacteria.
- Don't permit excessive, rapid drinking. Especially a consideration on hot days.
And perhaps most importantly, know your dog well so you'll know when your dog just isn't acting normally.

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