



Bloat (GD, GDV)

Bloat is the common term for two stomach disorders. Gastric dilatation (GD) occurs when the stomach fills with gas. Gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV) is when the stomach fills with gas and then twists on itself. Both situations can be serious and life threatening, especially GDV.



As the stomach fills with gas, the pressure in the stomach increases. The increased pressure along with the enlarged size of the stomach can lead to severe consequences. There can be pressure on the blood vessels preventing blood returning to the heart from the abdomen as well as a loss of blood flow to the stomach.

The enlarged stomach can put pressure on the diaphragm making it difficult for the lungs to expand and get enough oxygen to the body. The stomach can even rupture. When the distention of the stomach is severe enough the dog may go into shock.

The stomach can end up twisting within the abdomen. This is called volvulus and is a critical situation. When this happens, the blood supply can be cut off to the spleen and stomach causing those tissues to die. Dogs will go into shock quickly and won't survive without immediate surgery.

At Risk

Several factors are known to make a dog more likely to bloat. Large and giant breeds with deep chests and narrow waists are especially susceptible.

These include Weimaraner, St. Bernard, Gordon Setter, Irish Setter, Rottweiler, Doberman Pincher, and Standard Poodle. If dogs are related to a dog that has had the condition, they are also more susceptible.

Older dogs and dogs fed a single large meal once a day are more likely to bloat. However, any dog can have the condition. Dogs that are food gulpers or nervous may be more likely. It appears that swallowing air while eating increases the risk.

A moderate amount of exercise makes dogs less likely to bloat. No studies have shown that an elevated feeding bowl reduces the risk of bloat and one study indicated it might increase risk. The conclusion is that it's safer to feed from the floor.

Another study showed that dogs fed dry dog food that listed oil or fat among the first four ingredients on the label had a significantly increased risk. The amount of soy or cereal ingredients did not make a difference.

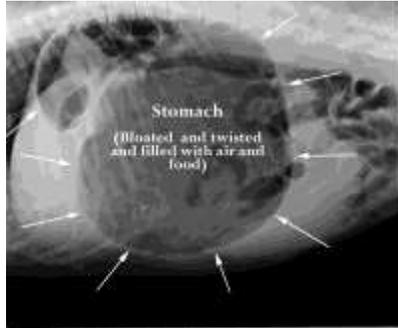
Signs

As the stomach enlarges, you will notice the abdomen getting bigger. The dog will be uncomfortable, possibly pacing, and eventually have an anxious look on its face. There is often non-productive retching – the dog acts as if it is vomiting but nothing comes up except maybe a little bit of foam.



They are often drooling. The dog can have rapid, shallow breathing and when shock develops, the dog will have pale gums. Eventually they will collapse.

X-rays will easily confirm the problem. An x-ray shows a large black gas-filled stomach taking up most of the space in the abdomen.



Treatment

THIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY. Don't wait to see if your dog gets better. Waiting an hour or two could have deadly consequences.

When the stomach is just distended with gas, a stomach tube can be passed to remove the gas and relieve the pressure. If the dog is in shock, treatment for that will be necessary.

When the stomach has rotated, immediate surgery is necessary to untwist the stomach in order to save the dog's life. If the condition has gone on too long, though, surgery may not be successful as the stomach tissue has died and the dog is in a serious state.

Prevention

You can't really prevent the stomach from enlarging but you can prevent the stomach from twisting. Preventive surgery to connect the stomach to the inside of the abdominal wall is a relatively easy procedure and can be done at any time.

The ideal time is when the dog is being spayed or neutered. With this surgery, the stomach is unable to rotate and you've prevented the worst-case scenario. Studies have shown a greatly reduced rate of mortality in dogs that had the preventive surgery done.

To minimize gas forming and extending the stomach, feed your dog with the bowl on the floor and prevent gulping. Use a bowl designed to slow down eating or use a food toy or puzzle. Feed multiple small meals throughout the day instead of one large one. Exercise your dog daily and maintain a healthy body weight.

