

GASTRIC BLOAT AND TORSION

Gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV) often referred to as “bloat” is a serious, life-threatening condition caused by abnormal dilation and twisting of the stomach. GDV is most common in deep chested or large to giant breed dogs. GDV can also occur in other breeds and can sometimes be associated with eating or drinking before or after exercise.

Signs that your dog may be experiencing GDV include

- Drooling
- Restlessness
- Pacing and panting
- Sudden abdominal distension
- No interest in food or water
- Trying to vomit with no success

The condition is started by an abnormal accumulation of air, fluid, or foam in the stomach. Bloat can occur with or without twisting. As the stomach enlarges, it may rotate up to 360 degrees, which creates the twist. The combination of bloat and torsion reduces blood supply to the stomach and spleen which can lead to necrosis (death of the tissues) of the stomach wall and spleen.

Bloat is diagnosed based on physical exam and x-ray findings. If a bloat has occurred, but there is no torsion, a stomach tube can be passed to remove the gas and other material within the stomach. If a stomach tube cannot be passed, torsion has occurred and surgery is required immediately. Even with surgery, it is estimated that at least 35% of dogs will not survive.

There are some steps you can take to help to prevent this deadly condition:

- Large dogs should be fed 2-3 times daily rather than 1 large meal
- Elevate food bowls (this is controversial, not everyone agrees this helps)
- Avoid vigorous exercise, excitement, stress, or large amounts of water one hour before and after meals
- At risk breeds can have a pexy performed during a spay or neuter procedure (this tacks the stomach to the body wall to prevent twisting in the event of a bloat)

Dogs that have survived bloat are at risk for future episodes, so during the surgery to correct bloat, the stomach wall is tacked (pexy) to the body wall to prevent future twists. If you have any questions about GDV, please talk to your vet.