

## **Gastric Dilatation Volvulus “Bloat”**

In the bloated stomach, gas and/or food stretches the stomach many times its normal size, causing tremendous abdominal pain. For reasons we do not fully understand, this grossly distended stomach has a tendency to rotate, thus twisting off not only its own blood supply but the only exit routes for the gas inside. Not only is this condition extremely painful but it is also rapidly life-threatening. A dog with a bloated, twisted stomach (more scientifically called gastric dilatation and volvulus) will die in pain in a matter of hours unless drastic steps are taken.

### **What are the risk factors for developing bloat?**

Classically, this condition affects dog breeds that are said to be deep-chested, meaning the length of their chest from backbone to sternum is relatively long while the chest width from right to left is narrow. Examples of deep chested breeds would be the Great Dane, Greyhound, and the setter breeds. Still, any dog can bloat, even dachshunds and Chihuahuas. Dogs weighing more than 99 pounds have an approximate 20 percent risk of bloat.

Classically, a dog who's bloated had eaten a large meal and exercised heavily shortly thereafter. Still, we usually do not know why a given dog bloats on an individual basis. No specific diet or dietary ingredient has been proven to be associated with bloat.

### **Factors increasing the risk of bloating**

- Feeding only one meal a day
- Having closely related family members with a history of bloat
- Eating rapidly
- Being thin or underweight
- Moistening dry foods (particularly if citric acid is listed as a preservative)
- Feeding from an elevated bowl
- Restricting water before and after meals
- Feeding a dry diet with animal fat listed in the first four ingredients
- Fearful or anxious temperament
- History of aggression towards people or other dogs
- Male dogs are more likely to bloat than females
- Older dogs (7 - 12 years) were the highest risk group

### **Factors decreasing the risk of bloating**

- Inclusion of canned dog food in the diet
- Inclusion of table scraps in the diet
- Happy or easy-going temperament
- Feeding a dry food containing a calcium-rich meat meal (such as meat/lamb meal, fish meal, chicken by-product meal, meat meal, or bone meal) listed in the first four ingredients of the ingredient list.
- Eating two or more meals per day

Contrary to popular belief, the presence of cereal ingredients such as soy, wheat or corn in the first four ingredients of the ingredient list does not increase the risk of bloat.

The dog may have an obviously distended stomach, especially near the ribs, but this is not always evident depending on the dog's body configuration.

### **How to tell if your dog has bloated**

The biggest clue is the vomiting: the pet appears highly nauseated and is retching but little is coming up. If this is seen, rush your dog to the veterinarian **IMMEDIATELY**.

### **What has to be done**

There are several steps to saving a bloated dog's life. Part of the problem is that all steps should be done at the same time and as quickly as possible. If you are concerned your pet is bloating please see your veterinarian or an emergency veterinarian immediately. These life-saving measures and confirming tests will need to be started and surgery will need to be performed quickly to save your pet.