

# BLOAT (GASTRIC DILATATION & VOLVULUS or GDV)

## BLOAT in Dogs

**Bloat** is a common term that can describe any condition where there is abnormal distention of the abdomen. However, when most people speak of "bloat", they are referring to **Gastric Dilatation & Volvulus (GDV)**, a life threatening condition in dogs where the stomach becomes acutely distended with gas (**Gastric Dilatation**) and then twists on itself (**Volvulus**), thus the term **GDV**. Another type of bloat is **Food Bloat**, most common in puppies that gorge themselves on food to the point of stuffing and distending their stomachs. Fortunately, most cases of food bloat resolve with IV fluids and medical support.

**GDV is a Surgical Emergency** and must be treated as soon as possible for a favorable outcome. If not treated promptly, the large distended stomach compresses the large blood vessels that return blood from the abdomen to the heart. The dog becomes progressively more shocky and often dies within a few hours if not treated. Additionally, when the stomach twists, the blood supply to the stomach is cut off and the stomach wall itself dies.

**GDV** occurs most frequently in large deep chest breeds particularly Great Danes, German Shepherds, Doberman Pinchers, Rottweilers, Weimarauners, Standard Poodles, Irish & English Setters, large Hounds, and Retrievers. However, we have treated bloat in other breeds including a Corgie & a Basset hound, so it is always a possibility if your dog is exhibiting the clinical signs.

## Symptoms of GDV

- History of recently being fed a meal
- Repeated attempts to vomit without bring up material (non-productive vomiting)
- Abdominal distention (hard round belly)
- Painful abdomen
- Hypersalivation
- Often dog is found collapsed and in shock

## Diagnosis

- **Physical examination-** there is usually an obvious distended, hard, tympanic (gas filled) abdomen. The dog often presents in shock with pale mucous membranes, high heart rate, weak pulses, short shallow breaths / panting, and possibly low body temperature. Occasionally, only a high heart rate, and abnormally placed spleen can be appreciated if the dog is presented shortly after bloating.

- **Radiology-** A radiograph (X-ray) is used to confirm a twisted stomach showing a classic gas pattern. A radiograph of the abdomen should always be taken if bloat is a possibility.
- In older dogs, X-rays of the chest should be taken to screen for metastatic cancer before proceeding to surgery
- **Blood work** is run to assess the dogs metabolic status in order to stabilize the dog as soon as possible for surgery
- In Rottweilers, Dobermans, and Weimarauners, clotting times should be assessed to make sure they do not have a bleeding disorder. Hemophilia and Von Willabrandts disease can occur in particular lines of these three breeds.

### Treatment- Emergency Surgery

- GDV/bloat is a SURGICAL EMERGENCY
- Priority is to stabilize the animal for surgery with IV fluids, antibiotics, & analgesics (pain medication) and possibly steroids or plasma
- The stomach is also decompressed by inserting a needle though the body wall into the stomach to deflate the stomach & relieve the pressure on the large blood vessels returning blood to the heart. This provides only temporary relief until the stomach is untwisted during surgery.
- Surgery- as soon as the patient is stable for anesthesia.
- Untwist stomach, pass stomach tube, and drain gas and fluid from stomach.
- Evaluate viability of stomach wall and spleen- remove any dead or necrotic areas of the stomach.
- "Pexy" the stomach- suture it to the abdominal wall so that it can not twist in the future
- Post-operative therapy includes intensive care with IV fluids, antibiotics, pain medication, and supportive care as needed.
- Complications include cardiac arrhythmias, low blood pressure, vomiting, & peritonitis (infection in the abdomen)

\*\* If a dog presents bloated but the stomach has not yet twisted or has been pexied, the dog can often be treated successfully by passing a stomach tube to deflate the stomach.

### Prognosis

- Guarded to good depending primarily on the duration between the onset of bloat, and veterinary attention.
- Without surgery, a dog with a twisted stomach will die a painful death.