

Bloat (Gastric Torsion)

Bloat is a most serious condition and mainly affects large deep chested breeds. It requires immediate veterinary attention.

Description

The stomach becomes dilated due to an abnormal accumulation of gas or air. The enlargement often results in gut twisting. This twisting (volvulus) then sets up a series of reactions within the body resulting in a critical condition that is frequently fatal. The series of events can take place very rapidly (possibly within minutes). Bloat usually occurs in dogs over the age of 12 months. It can affect puppies but this is rare.

Causes

Many theories exist as to the cause of bloat including:

- Food Related—certain types of food - i.e. soya based cereal foods.
- Eating too quickly or too much food at one meal.
- Delays in the passage of food through the gut.
- Presence of certain bacteria in the stomach, causing an abnormal level of fermentation to take place.
- Physical Stress - e.g. during showing; change of environment such as kennelling; fear (thunderstorms etc); death of owner or dog companion; males living with bitches in season; illness.

Signs of Bloat (roughly in order of appearance)

First Signs:

- Restlessness
- Unproductive vomiting/retching of a saliva-type frothy substance that can resemble whisked egg white and/or bubbles (undigested food is not normally seen)
- **TIME TO CALL YOUR VET !** (and explain you think your dog has bloat)
- Abdominal swelling (swelling is not always obvious)
- Tightness over the abdomen
- Stance - dog stands with front legs apart and head down

Later signs:

- Difficulty in Breathing
- Shock - followed by collapse

First Aid - Action you can take

You can give your dog 8 fluid ounces of antacid. Brand names to look out for are Actonorm, Altacite Plus, Asilone, Infacol, Simeco and Polycol. Ask the chemist for the 'activated' type of antacid. Always keep an antacid in the house and regularly check its expiry date. Once administered, do not wait to see if the antacid improves the condition of the dog. Take your dog to the vet immediately - time is of the essence. Not all Veterinary Surgeons agree with the administering of an antacid. You should check this point with your Vet. If you have given your dog an antacid, do remember to tell your Vet the time, brand and quantity of antacid given.

Prevention

- Feed your dog twice a day (or more) to prevent overloading the stomach.
- Prevent your dog gulping down its food.
- Avoid exercise for at least 1 hour before and 2 hours after meals.
- Do not feed immediately before or after any situation that might cause your dog stress e.g. Dog Shows. If you withhold food on a show day, on returning home, do not feed your dog a large meal. Feed only half of the normal quantity.
- Avoid excessive drinking at one time.
- Avoid leaving your dog for long periods without being checked. Bloat can strike at any time of the day!