

Diagnosis, Treatment & Prognosis of Bloat

The dog is first given intravenous fluids and other treatments to combat shock, pain and infection, before an X-Ray is taken and an attempt made to pass a stomach tube. If the entry to the stomach is not entirely blocked, the tube will relieve the gas buildup and the stomach can be emptied. After treatment, a decision is made about surgery to avoid recurrence, the rate of which can be as high as 75%.

If the stomach tube cannot be passed, surgery must be performed to relieve the pressure in the stomach and the swollen spleen.

Once the dog is stabilized, abdominal surgery is usually indicated to accomplish three things:

- Assess the health of the stomach and surrounding organs. If areas of the stomach or spleen have been irreversibly damaged, they are removed. In such a case, the chances for recovery are very poor, and euthanasia may be an alternative.
- Properly reposition the stomach
- Suture the stomach in a way to prevent it from twisting again (a procedure called gastropexy). If gastropexy is not performed, 75–80% of dogs will develop Bloat again.

Bloat is expensive to treat due to the need for intensive care and surgery. It is a highly risky surgery due to the effects that shock have on the body systems, and some cases are fatal either during surgery or in the post-operative period, despite the best veterinary care.

Bloat Prevention – is it possible?

Despite adopting all of the recommendations listed below, a dog may still develop Bloat. Because of the genetic link involved with this disease, prospective pet owners should question if there is a history of Bloat in the lineage of any puppy that is from a breed listed as high risk. In addition, the following recommendations should be followed:

- **BE AWARE OF SIGNS** – Owners of breeds at risk should be aware of the early signs of bloat and what to do.
- **FED SMALLER & MORE OFTEN** – Dogs should be fed smaller meals two or three times daily, rather than once a day.
- **STOP WATER GULPING** – Water should be available at all times, but should be limited immediately after feeding.
- **LIMIT EXERCISE** – Vigorous exercise, excitement, and stress should be avoided one hour before and two hours after meals.
- **CHANGES TO DIET** – Diet changes should be made gradually over a period of three to five days.
- **STOP FOOD GULPING** – Susceptible dogs should be fed individually and, if possible in a quiet location to avoid eating too quickly. Slowing feeding down can happen using a bowl like a Scoff Stopper.
- **DON'T ELEVATE FOOD** – Dogs should not be fed from elevated feeders.

So what do we do at We Love Dogs Kennel Resort for all our guests who maybe at risk of Bloat?

Firstly all our staff are trained to see the early warning signs and understand the critical nature of Bloat to the dogs health and safety. A high staff to dog ratio ensures that we are always with the dogs and watching their behaviour closely for changes.

Secondly all our guests are fed similar meals to what they receive at home and they are fed 2–3 smaller meals per day. Those dogs that are at highest risk (Great Danes, German Shepards, Saint Bernards) often receive 4–5 very small meals through-out the day as a precaution.

Thirdly our meals and exercise times are planned carefully each day for each dog to ensure that they are not at risk.

And lastly the food and water consumption is monitored closely (with scoff stoppers for our very fast eaters) ensuring gulping is minimised.

We understand that Bloat is a terribly confusing health issue as the exact cause is yet to be determined. The American Kennel Association is currently funding research and we hope that one day we can rewrite this brochure to tell you the exact whys and wherefores regarding this terrible and fast acting illness. In the mean time however we hope that this brochure helps you to understand it as best as can be for the time being but most of all we hope you NEVER have to experience it. We know from personal experience with our own dog how terrible this can be but how if you catch it early enough there is some hope of recovery.

We would like to thank the following contributors for the Veterinarian information provided in this brochure:

Petalia Resident Vet: Dr Julia Adams BVSc CMAVA – www.petalia.com.au

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff – www.peteducation.com

Please feel free to share this information with your Vet, your fellow dog loving friends and your breeder – the more people who are aware of Bloat hopefully the less dogs that will suffer.

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we love
DOGS
Kennel Resort



BLOAT

(Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus – GDV)

Customer Information Sheet

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At We Love Dogs your dog's health & safety is our number 1 priority. The following information has been provided to help you better understand GDV – Bloat.

What is Bloat?

What are the signs?

How is it treated?



At We Love Dogs we are fortunate to care for thousands of dogs every year, from the very small to the very tall, the very young to the very old and every dog in between.

Over many years of caring for dogs we have come to understand that there are a number of health issues that owners, even the most responsible ones (like all our clients), are unaware of when it comes to their beloved pooches.

To help you be the very best pack leader you can be we have developed a number of health information fliers to inform you about some common but misunderstood health issues.

This flier is specifically about Bloat or GDV (Gastric Dilatation & Volvulus) a terrible health issue particularly prevalent in large breed dogs. This is close to our heart as we had our own dog Jack, a Briard (French Sheepdog), suffer from Bloat late one Friday night. Jack survived as we were able to intervene quickly but was coined the million dollar dog after this night. Unfortunately not all dogs that get Bloat will survive but knowing the early warning signs and what to do is the best way we can help you to care for your beautiful dog.

What is Bloat?

For reasons that are not well understood, gas and/or food stretches the stomach many times its normal size and the stomach turns more than 180 degrees on its longitudinal axis, sealing off both the entry and exit from the stomach. The spleen swells placing pressure on the major vein bringing blood back to the heart from the lower body. Many damaging events follow including the release of toxins from the dying stomach lining and heart dysfunction. Without immediate care the dog goes into shock and dies.

Bloat is an extremely serious condition, and should be considered a life-threatening emergency when it occurs. There are no home remedies for bloat, therefore dog owners must contact their veterinarians immediately if they suspect that their dog has bloat.

Dogs can die of bloat within several hours. Even with treatment, as many as 25–33% of dogs with GDV will not survive.

What causes Bloat?

There is no one particular activity that leads to the development of Bloat. It appears that it occurs as a combination of events. There are many theories about the cause of Bloat from Veterinarians. Factors may include feeding large meals of dry food followed by exercise, abrupt changes in diet, drinking a large amount of water after eating, and greedy gulping of food. Other causes such as grass eating and lack of bulk in the diet have been proposed, but nothing has been proven.

Which Dogs are most at risk of getting Bloat?

There is a definite link between the likelihood of occurrence of Bloat and the breed and build of the dog. Bloat is much more likely to occur in large breeds with deep, narrow chests. The problem can occur in small dogs, but only rarely.

Breed	Bloat Risk Ratio
Great Dane, Saint Bernard	20 – 40%
Weimaraner, Irish Setter, Gordon Setter	10 – 20%
Standard Poodle, Basset Hound, Doberman	5 – 10%
Old English Sheepdog, German Shorthaired Pointer, Newfoundland, German Shepard, Airedale Terrier, Alaskan Malamute	4 – 5%
Chesapeake Bay Retriever, Boxer	3 – 4%
Collie, Labrador, English Springer Spaniel	2 – 3%
Samoyed, Dachshund, Golden Retriever, Rottweiler, Mixed Breed	1 – 2%
All other dogs	0 – 1%

Study conducted by The University of Purdue

There has also been links found with genetics, age, gender, temperament and even the frequency of eating.

Genetics – The incidence is closely correlated to the depth and width of the dog's chest. Several different genes from the parents determine these traits. If both parents have particularly deep and narrow chests, then it is highly likely that their offspring will have deep and narrow chests and the resulting problems that may go with it.

Age – Dogs over 7 years of age are more than twice as likely to develop gastric dilatation and volvulus as those who are 2–4 years of age.

Gender – Male dogs are twice as likely to develop bloat as females. Neutering does not appear to have an effect on the risk.

Eating habits – Dogs fed once a day are twice as likely to develop Bloat as those fed twice a day. It appears that dogs who eat rapidly or exercise soon after a meal may also be at increased risk.

Temperament – Dogs that tend to be more nervous, anxious, or fearful appear to be at an increased risk of developing bloat.

Symptoms & Signs of Bloat

The most obvious signs are abdominal distention (swollen, hard belly) and nonproductive vomiting (animal appears to be vomiting, but nothing comes up) and retching.

The stomach and abdomen will be distended and hard to the touch. This distension is first apparent on the left hind side of the abdomen

Other signs include restlessness (pacing & panting), abdominal pain, and rapid shallow breathing. Profuse salivation may indicate severe pain. If the dog's condition continues to deteriorate the dog may go into shock and become pale (check gum color), have a weak pulse, a rapid heart rate, become lethargic and eventually collapse.