



CANINE BLOAT

GASTRIC DILATATION-VOLVULUS

Bloat is a life-threatening condition that pet owners should be trained to recognize so that they can seek immediate medical attention. There are also steps that can help minimize the risk of bloat, especially for breeds that are prone to this type of problem.

What is bloat?

Bloat occurs when the stomach becomes severely expanded due to the accumulation of fluids, food, and air in the digestive tract. This often causes the stomach to twist over on itself, effectively shutting down the entrance to and exit from the stomach cavity. This can result in the buildup of toxins in the stomach which can cause stomach rupture and an infection of the stomach cavity. In addition, the twisting of the stomach compresses a major artery and decreases blood flow, causing an irregular heartbeat in many cases. Other internal organs may also be affected as a result of the decreased blood flow. Because these changes can happen so quickly, a case of bloat can result in death in just a few hours.

What causes bloat?

It is thought that the following factors may contribute to bloat:

- Eating Habits
- Exercise
- Stress
- Heredity
- Disposition

How can you recognize that bloat is occurring?

The following can be signs of bloat, but don't waste too much time doing a self-diagnosis. It is much better to be safe than sorry. If you suspect bloat, take your dog to a veterinarian immediately.

- Distended, gas-filled stomach
- Attempts to vomit without success
- Whining
- Salivation
- Difficult breathing
- Rapid heartbeat
- Signs of shock
 - o Pale gums
 - o Shallow rapid breathing
 - o Cold skin
 - o Weakness

- o Fast pulse
- o Loss of consciousness

How can you help minimize the risk of bloat?

The following measure can at least help minimize the risk of bloat, although they will not remove the risk entirely, since some of the factors are genetic/hereditary.

- Feed your dog several small meals a day rather than one or two large meals. Mix your dog's dry food with water so that the expansion occurs prior to eating.
- Teach your dog to eat slowly. For families with multiple dogs, feed them in separate rooms so that they don't feel the need to eat quickly.
- Keep your dog from vigorous exercise one hour before and two hours after eating.
- Don't allow your dog to drink large amounts of water before and after eating.
- Avoid feeding "people food" or table scraps that may upset your dog's digestive system.
- Know your dog's normal behavior, so that you can quickly recognize if there is a problem.
- Keep the location, hours, and phone numbers of veterinary clinic handy in case of an emergency. Also, check before there is a problem to see if your veterinarian will need to refer you to a specialty practice or veterinary school hospital that specializes in treating cases of severe bloat.

What breeds are prone to bloat?

Although any dog can be affected by bloat, it most often occurs in deep-chested, large and giant breeds between the ages of 4 and 10 years old.

- Great Dane
- German Shepherd
- Standard Poodle
- Rottweiler
- Akita
- Bloodhound
- Irish Setter
- Golden Retriever
- Irish Wolfhound
- Labrador
- Newfoundland

The following small/mid-sized breeds may also be prone to bloat:

- Dachshund
- Basset Hound
- Airedale Terrier

What do you do if you suspect your dog has bloat?

Take your dog to a veterinarian immediately!

What is the treatment for bloat?

The series of steps the veterinarian may perform for diagnosing and treating bloat are as follows:

- Diagnose bloat through physical exam, X-Ray, and/or EKG.
- Evaluate and treat the patient for shock by administering fluids and/or antibiotics/corticosteroids.
- Decompress the dog's stomach through a tube down the esophagus or through a large bore needle through the dog's side.
- If this does not resolve the bloat, surgery may be needed to decompress and untwist the dog's stomach. ■