

WHAT IS BLOAT?

Gastric dilatation-volvulus (GDV), commonly called “bloat” and also known as twisted stomach or gastric torsion, is a medical condition in which the stomach becomes overstretched and rotated by excessive gas content.

The stomach is not able to rid itself of the excess gas and may twist on its axis, causing obstructions at each end of the stomach (*volvulus* refers to the twisting motion). In short, both the esophagus and intestines may become twisted shut. A dog may appear uncomfortable, pace or salivate at this time. Some, however, show few signs; it depends upon the severity and rate at which the bloating occurs.

Bloat is a life-threatening emergency that commonly affects dogs. It occurs primarily in large, deep-chested breeds. Bloat occurs without warning and is very difficult to treat.

Learn more about bloat, its warning signs and treatment, in this informative brochure from your IBPSA member pet care provider.

Your IBPSA member pet care provider is devoted to your pet's well-being. Look for the IBPSA membership certificate proudly displayed.

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BLOAT



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It does not seem to affect one sex more than the other, but is more likely to occur as a dog ages.

Bloat commonly occurs in dogs between the ages of 7 and 12 years.

CAUSES OF BLOAT

Some of the more widely acknowledged factors for developing bloat include increased age, breed, having a deep and narrow chest, stress, eating foods such as kibble that expand in the stomach, overfeeding, too much water consumption in a small period of time, before or after exercise, and other causes of gastrointestinal disease and distress.

Unfortunately, no one thing has been proven to cause bloat.

It is normally seen in the large, deep-chested breeds – Great Danes, Collies, Dobermans, German Shepherds, or Boxers, for example – but may also occur in smaller breeds like Beagles and Bichons. It appears to run in hereditary lines of certain breeds.

I've heard about raising my dog's bowl when he eats. Does that help prevent bloat?

A study published by the Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine indicates that raising food bowls off the floor actually doubles the risk of bloat, rather than lowering the incidence at which it occurs.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF BLOAT

Symptoms are not necessarily distinguishable from other kinds of distress. A dog might stand uncomfortably and seem to be in extreme discomfort for no apparent reason. The most obvious sign is distention and swelling of the abdominal cavity as the stomach expands. Other possible symptoms include weakness, depression, difficulty breathing, hypersalivation, and retching without vomiting. A veterinary hospital will confirm the diagnosis with an abdominal x-ray. Bloat causes a total collapse. The dog goes into shock, and ultimately can die from cardiac irregularities.

TREATMENT OF BLOAT

Bloat is an emergency medical condition, having the animal examined by a veterinarian is imperative as it can become fatal within a matter of minutes. According to statistics, up to 40% of bloat cases will die even with veterinary attention. Treatment to stabilize the pet with IVs is started in early phases, and the stomach decompressed. This may be accomplished by passing a stomach tube, but sometimes surgery will be the only option to try to save the pet. During surgery, the stomach is placed back into its correct position and “tacked” in place. Surgery is not always successful; some pets will not recover even with it. After surgery, several days of hospitalized care will be necessary. A pet that lives through a bloating episode, but does not have corrective surgery, will be at a high risk for another attack. Without “tacking” the stomach in place, a dog will most likely bloat again.

FAQ: BLOAT AND YOUR PET CARE PROVIDER

Does bloating occur more often in pet care facilities?

No. Since all the factors that contribute to bloat are not clear, there is no way of predicting when a bloating episode may occur. It can happen at any time and anywhere: at home, a veterinary office, or a pet care facility. Sometimes owners will notice the signs, but not attribute them to a real problem until the pet collapses. Your IBPSA pet care facility manager and staff are acutely aware of the dangers of bloat, and constantly monitor dogs in their care.

Can the pet care facility prevent my dog from bloating?

Most pet care facilities take precautions to not overfeed or let pets drink excessive amounts of water. Also, dogs are typically exercised well before or after meals. If your pet is in a high risk category because of their breed, age or deep and narrow chest, special observation notes may be made. Even with careful precautions and diligent observation, bloat may occur. In a boarding environment, bloating seems to occur with a higher frequency at night or in the early morning hours.

You have a right for your pet care facility to provide the best possible care, just as the pet care facility has a right to expect you to accept financial responsibility for such care. Bloat can be an expensive medical condition, so discuss guidelines for financial responsibility with your pet care facility. Be certain they know your wishes for any medical emergency and to leave an emergency number where you or someone who can make decisions for you can be reached.