



GDV (bloat) in dogs

GDV stands for gastric dilation volvulus but is often known as 'bloat' or gastric torsion. This is a life-threatening condition. In its early stages the stomach may just be filled with gas (gastric dilation) but as it expands the gas then causes the stomach to flip/twist on its axis which causes an obstruction, further worsening the gas build up. This is known as a GDV.

The dilated stomach presses on other organs, the diaphragm and blood vessels meaning that blood cannot get back to the heart easily. This can cause the body to rapidly go into shock. In addition to this, the spleen can get tangled in with the stomach which severely restricts its blood supply causing it to start to necrose (die), and the restricted blood flow can also allow the stomach to start to necrose. Digestion stops, and toxins build up in the blood.

GDV is A LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCY. Not many conditions are as dangerous as this for your dog. Without treatment, dogs suffering from GDV will almost certainly die. With emergency surgery, your dog could have a chance of surviving, however the initial severity can be very variable and can impact on prognosis, with a very poor prognosis in some cases. It is a rare condition overall, making up less than 1% of veterinary emergencies.

What causes a GDV?

The exact cause is not fully known, however, anecdotally most vets and owners will suggest that it is associated with eating and subsequent exercise. It is generally seen within a two to three hours after eating/drinking and exercise.

Is my dog at risk?

All dogs can be affected... we have even seen a chihuahua with a GDV here! However, it is much more common in deep chested breeds such as Great Danes, St. Bernards, Weimaraners, German Shepherds, Mastiffs, Dobermans, Setters etc. The risk increases with age, and body weight is strongly associated; dogs weighing more than 40kg are much more likely to be affected.

Clinical Signs

Early signs include:

- Restlessness
- Breathing more quickly
- Drooling
- Vomiting up froth or trying to vomit with nothing produced

Later signs include:

- Swollen abdomen
- Pain
- Pale gums
- Rapid heart rate
- Collapse

Diagnosis

The history provided by you at the consultation as well as a clinical examination will give your vet a strong suspicion of a possible GDV. Following from this, x-rays are needed for confirmation. Blood tests will also be performed to check for organ function and signs of toxicity.

Treatment

- Aggressive fluid therapy (going on a drip).
- Placing a stomach tube - to release gas from the stomach. This is sometimes impossible as the



entrance to the stomach can be blocked by the twist.

- Per-cutaneous decompression – Placing a needle through the skin and body wall of the abdomen to release gas from the stomach. This is often challenging as the needle blocks easily with stomach contents and is only to stabilise before surgery.
- Surgical correction – This is emergency surgery, and when a true GDV is present, it must be performed to have any chance of survival. The stomach is untwisted, deflated and assessed for any tissue death that may mean the stomach is not salvageable. The spleen will also be checked and if it has started to necrose, it will be removed.

Your dog will not be out of the woods after surgery. They will need to remain in intensive care for several days afterwards. Heart irregularities and kidney problems are a common complication of the condition and can be severe.

How can I prevent bloat in my dog?

- Carefully manage your dog's feeding and exercise regime. There is no clear research, but we advise walking your dog before it is fed rather than after. If this is not possible, allow at least an hour after feeding before walking your dog.
- Feed little and often rather than one or two big meals
- Pre-emptive gastro-pxy during neutering – this is where the wall of the stomach is fixed to inside of the body wall at the time of neutering making it much harder for it to twist in the future. The above recommendations must also still be adhered to.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT GDV IN YOUR DOG YOU MUST VISIT YOUR VET IMMEDIATELY AS ANY DELAY WILL REDUCE THE CHANCE OF SURVIVAL. Call the practice on 01626 835002 if you are concerned.