



Navarro Small Animal Clinic

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Bloat in Dogs

By: Dr. Shana Bohac

Many people have heard about the life threatening condition in dogs known as bloat. The veterinary term for this is GDV or Gastric Dilatation Volvulus. This occurs most commonly in older, large or giant breed dogs with what we call a 'deep chest'. Typically some of your larger Labrador Retrievers, Great Danes, German Shepherds and Dobermans have a higher history of bloating because of their very large chest and room for the stomach to gas up and twist around. Bloat occurs when there is an accumulation of excess fluid or gas in the stomach. The stomach then rotates itself causing a twist leaving no way for anything (gas or fluid) to escape. The reason this becomes such an emergency so quickly is that the stomach produces a lot of gastric juices that work to digest the contents. When the food is being broken down, gas is released. When the stomach is twisted, there is nowhere for the gas to escape, causing severe swelling and pain for the dog. The twist can cause a decreased blood supply to the stomach which can lead to changes in blood pressure and loss of organ function. If the stomach's position is not corrected within a few hours, they can lose their life.

Signs that indicate your pet is having an episode of bloat include abdominal distension, pain, drooling, vomiting, retching, and collapse.

The veterinarian will attempt to pass a stomach tube and force the stomach to rotate back into position and release the trapped air. If this is not successful then the stomach will be tapped to remove some air to provide pain relief. Once the stomach is deflated then surgery is performed to untwist the stomach and tack the stomach wall to a nearby rib. This anchors it into place and helps prevent future rotation. The patient will be placed on fluids, antibiotics, and gastroprotectants.

There are a few things you can do to help prevent this from happening. Choosing a high quality food is important as well as feeding 2 or 3 small meals (instead of one large meal) a day. It is imperative to make sure your dog is not eating or even drinking at a rapid pace. You can slow down their eating by placing a very large (softball or larger) sized rock in the center of the food bowl will help slow your pet's eating pace. There are also special bowls with the center cut out or toys that force your pet to work for their food. You should keep your dog in a stress free environment before, during, and after a meal. It is also important to keep your dog from playing after a big meal.

If you are considering getting a dog that is prone to bloat just practice safe eating habits. Some people get their pet's stomach tacked as a preventative measure during a spay/neuter procedure.