

Bloating In Dogs

When a dog's stomach fills with gas, it bloats. The expansion of the stomach puts pressure on the muscle that separates the chest cavity from the abdomen, which in turn makes it hard for the dog to breathe. The stomach will also twist or create what is called gastric torsion. This in turn can cause shock and rapid death. Therefore, bloating should always be treated as a dire emergency.

Bloating can happen to any breed of dog at any age. However, large breeds with deep chests, like Great Danes, Standard Poodles or the large Setters, are more likely to suffer from this type of emergency. In certain instances, bloating is noted when the dog exercises immediately after eating. The most obvious symptom is, of course, an enlarged abdomen. You may also observe labored breathing, excessive drooling, vomiting, a weak pulse, and paleness in the nose and mouth.

Although there are environmental and genetic factors that remain unknown, the chances of bloating are increased by overeating and excessive drinking. Allowing a dog to exercise or especially roll shortly after a meal can also cause problems.

If you should notice any of the above signs or symptoms take the dog to a veterinarian right away. There, she will be treated with drugs to counter-act shock, have the stomach dilation reduced by passing a stomach tube if possible, and have surgery performed to rotate the stomach back to a normal position and have the stomach wall attached to a side of the abdomen that should prevent re-occurrence of the twisting or torsion.

Prevention:

Provide dogs with a predisposition to gastric torsion with only normal-sized food portions and allow him time to digest after a meal and before any strenuous exercise. This can help prevent occurrences of bloating. Some veterinarians will recommend that breeds more commonly affected with bloating undergo a gastropexy, a surgical procedure in which the stomach is attached to the body wall to prevent it from shifting or twisting. Many veterinary facilities are equipped to provide the care required to treat this emergency. If you cannot contact your veterinarian immediately, transport him to a 24 hour emergency hospital as soon as possible.

Time is of the essence. Do not delay! In our geographic area there are 24 emergency clinics in Woburn and at the Angell Animal Medical Center in Boston.