



Southside Animal Hospital

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Preventative Gastropexy in Dogs

What is Gastric Dilation-Volvulus(Bloat)?

Gastric Dilation-Volvulus is a sudden and life-threatening condition of dogs. In this condition, the stomach fills with gas, and twists in the body. This cuts off the blood supply to the stomach and the spleen. If not caught quickly, the stomach and spleen can die. The heart can also have fatal abnormal rhythms. If caught quickly, surgery can be performed and the dog can live. Many times it is caught too late and the dog is too far gone for surgery, does not do well in surgery, does not recover well, or is just found dead.



With the onset of this condition, often the dog will seem agitated and uncomfortable. They may pace, or refuse to lie down. They may have dry vomiting or excessive drooling. The abdomen begins to get large suddenly when gas starts to build up in the stomach. Eventually they become weak, collapse, and have an increased breathing rate.

It is most commonly seen in middle-aged to older dogs. Common breeds are Great Danes, Doberman Pinchers, Mastiffs, Sharpei, as well as other large breed dogs. If there has been close family members of your pet to have this condition, there can be an increased risk for your dog. Dogs that eat large volumes at mealtime are also at increased risk.

What can I do to prevent this from happening to my dog?

Although studies have had mixed results on methods to prevent this problem, there are several steps that can be taken to help prevent this problem in your pet. First, feed at least two times a day, instead of one big meal a day. Eating smaller meals allows less gas to build from the food digesting in the stomach. Second, feed only dog food to your dog and avoid table food. Our food contains more fat than dog food. Higher fat content in food may contribute to this condition. Third, feed your dog with his bowl off the floor. A higher bowl allows your dog's neck to be straighter and more easily burp any gas that forms in the stomach. Fourth, you can have a preventative gastropexy performed on your pet.

What is a preventative gastropexy?

This is procedure performed to prevent the twisting of the stomach. The other methods mentioned above are used to prevent the gas formation. The gas buildup is not the fatal part of this disease (although it requires immediate medical attention). The twisting of the stomach is what can kill your dog.

Although there are several surgical methods used to accomplish this, the goal of the surgery is to leave the stomach in a normal position in the body, and cause a permanent adhesion between the body wall and the stomach. If this is accomplished if the stomach fills with gas, it is unable to twist. This procedure can be performed at the same time as when your pet is spayed, neutered, or with other procedures.

Your pet may never bloat, but if it does, this procedure may save his life.

