

Bloat and Preventative Gastropexy

What Is “Bloat?”

Bloat is the lay-term for gastric dilatation-volvulus (GDV), a potentially fatal condition where the stomach flips over in the abdomen, compressing and cutting off its blood supply. Without adequate blood flow, the stomach tissue rapidly starts to die – and without quick surgical intervention, the affected pet soon follows.

Who’s At Risk?

While bloat can happen in any breed, it is most common in large breed, deep-chested dogs. Labs, Danes, German Shepherds, Rottis and any other dog of similar size & shape are “poster children” for the condition. In fact, GDV used to be the leading cause of death in Military Working Dogs – but since the Army started doing prophylactic gastropexys on all of them, it’s basically unheard of.

What Are The Signs Of Bloat?

This is an extremely uncomfortable condition, and affected dogs are often anxious, pacing, and obviously distressed. Many will retch without bringing anything up and drool excessively. As the condition progresses, they become increasingly depressed, eventually developing shock and becoming unresponsive. Affected dogs often (but not always) have a visibly distended belly due to the swelling of their stomach.

Can Bloat Be Treated?

Yes, though success of corrective surgery depends on many factors and is far from guaranteed. While many dogs survive if caught and treated quickly, emergency surgery and a few days in the hospital will be required. Bills typically run \$2000-\$5000, and again, not all dogs will make it home.

How Can We Prevent Bloat?

A **gastropexy** is a simple surgical procedure with a high success rate in preventing GDV. The idea is simple - fix the stomach in the abdomen to prevent life-threatening rotation. This is done by making an incision in the muscular layer of the stomach and another in the muscle of the abdominal wall, then suturing the two together. The two incisions heal together, preventing rotation of the stomach and thus also preventing a future, potentially fatal emergency.

Who Should Have A Gastropexy?

We recommend the procedure in all large breed dogs. Some dogs are at greater risk than others, and we are always happy to talk about if gastropexy is right for your pet. Ideally, a gastropexy is performed at the time of spay or neuter, but it can also be performed as a separate procedure at any time.

Are There Risks With Gastropexy?

There are of course risks with any surgical procedure, but a properly performed gastropexy should not carry more risk than other routine surgeries such as spaying. We do advise owners to restrict activity for three weeks, simply to encourage good healing of the site.