Gastric Torsion/Bloat in Dogs

If you own a deep chested dog such as a Labrador Retriever, Doberman Pinscher, Akita or Great Dane you must be made aware of Gastric Torsion or commonly referred to as Bloat.

Bloat is caused by too much gas or fluid in the stomach. This gas can extend the stomach causing gastric dilation. If the stomach partially rotates its called gastric torsion. If it fully rotates its called gastric volvolus. Each can be a life threatening problem.

**BLOAT FACTS:**

1. Dogs with bloat nearly always are between four and seven years of age. Two-thirds are males.
2. It usually affects dogs of the larger, deeper-chested breeds: Great Danes, German Shepherds, St. Bernards, Labrador Retrievers, Irish Wolfhounds, Great Pyrenees, Boxers, Weimaraners, Old English Sheepdogs, Irish Setters, and others of large size (58 pounds was the average size in one study) It rarely occurs in small breeds.
3. Dogs who bloat tend to eat large quantities of dry kibble.
4. They exercise vigorously after eating and tend to drink water in large amounts after meals.
5. They may have a history of digestive upsets (gastritis).
6. There may be a familial association with other dogs who have bloated.

**SIGNS OF GASTRIC DILATION**

The signs are excessive salivation and drooling, extreme restlessness, attempts to vomit and defecate, evidence of abdominal pain (the dog whines and groans when you push on the stomach wall) and abdominal distention. Its important to know the history of the dog. Has it eaten recently? Drunk water? Has it been running or exercising within 2-3 hours of eating?

If the dog is able to burp or vomit you can usually rest assured that the gut is not twisted. This can be treated at home. Give Mylanta by mouth. Dosage for a small dog is 6 ounces; Medium dog is 8 ounces; large dog 12 ounces. Make sure you walk the dog after giving the Mylanta until the bloat is relieved or until you can contact a veterinarian. If the bloat is relieved at home, it would still be a good idea to contact your vet to let them know the dog bloated. **IF YOU ARE UNSURE, RUSH THIS DOG TO THE VET IMMEDIATELY. THIS COULD BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH FOR YOUR DOG.** Once a dog bloats, it will usually bloat again in the future.

**SIGNS OF TORSION OR VOLVULUS**

The initial signs are the same for Gastric Dilation except more severe. The distress is more evident. There could be rapid breathing, pale gums and the dog may collapse. The shock like symptoms are due to the strangulation of the blood supply to the stomach and spleen. **RUSH THIS DOG TO THE VET IMMEDIATELY.** Surgery is needed to relieve a torsion or volvulus. The chance of a recurrence is about 15 percent.

**PREVENTION**

Knowing of this problem is the first part of prevention. Feed several small meals throughout the day ***(at LEAST 2)*** instead of one big meal. Keep the dog quiet at ***LEAST*** one hour before and at ***LEAST*** 2 hours after a meal. This means no roughhousing or playing. If the dog usually gets rambuncious after a meal, crate this animal. Monitor and restrict the water intake of the dog before and especially after a meal. The dog should not drink after eating dry kibble. Therefore, it is best to thoroughly soak the kibble for at least 30 minutes before feeding this to the dog. Try not to feed a kibble which expands greatly when wet. Do the kibble test overnight. Put a cup of kibble in a bowl. Add water and let soak over night. What you see in the morning is the amount of swelling this food will do in your dog's stomach. If its excessive, change to another kibble which doesn't swell as much. Always keep Mylanta on hand.

These measures may prevent some cases of bloat but will not prevent all cases. Being aware might be the difference between life and death for your dog.