

## Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus (GDV)



### What is GDV?

Dilatation is distention of the stomach, usually with air or food. Volvulus is when the stomach actually rotates on its axis. GDV is also called 'bloat'. There are different degrees of distention and/or rotation. Rotation is the dangerous part of this disease while distention can resolve with time. This difference is because when the stomach rotates there is no exit for the stomach gases since the intestines are twisted off by the rotation.

This event is a life threatening emergency because the distended and rotated stomach can obstruct normal blood flow causing the dog to go into shock. The stomach tissue can also die or rupture with prolonged GDV. The spleen can also become twisted.

GDV tend to occur in large breed dogs (Great Danes, German Sheppards, Doberman pinchers).

The exact cause is unknown but several factors are known to predispose dogs to GDV such as:

- Increasing age
- Large breed dogs with deep and narrow chests
- Family history of GDV
- Breed, a nervous temperament
- Faster speed of eating
- Feeding from a raised food bowl
- Feeding once daily
- Feeding a large volume of food per meal
- Purebred dogs are 3 times as likely as mixed breed dogs and
- Males are twice as likely as females

### What are the clinical signs?

The most common sign is non productive vomiting where your dog may retch and only bring up foam.

Other signs include a distended abdomen, excessive salivation, collapse, and pain.

### How do we diagnose GDV?

Radiographs (xrays) will show a distended and rotated stomach.

Bloodwork will be performed to look for changes in blood acid/base balance, electrolytes, and hydration level.

### How do we treat GDV?

GDV requires immediate surgery to correct the stomach position and affix it to the body wall so that it won't twist again in the future.

Before surgery IV fluids will be started and a stomach tube may be passed to decompress (empty) the stomach so that the tissues can relax.

Surgery entails moving the stomach back to the correct position. In severe cases dead stomach tissue may need to be surgically removed. If the spleen is in an abnormal position

it may also need to be removed.

Once the stomach is in the correct position it will be sewn to the body wall to prevent recurrence. This is called a gastropexy.

Post operative care is extremely important. These patients are at risk for cardiac arrhythmias, electrolyte abnormalities, and severely affected animals can have clotting abnormalities.

### **Follow-up & Prognosis**

GDV is fatal if the stomach is not rotated back into its normal position. In general this cannot be done without surgery. The prognosis can vary depending on how quickly the dog receives treatment. The longer treatment and/or surgery is delayed the worse the prognosis.

Breeds considered high risk for having a GDV can have a prophylactic gastropexy done to help prevent a GDV from occurring. This procedure can be done laparoscopically-assisted which makes the procedure less painful, results in smaller incisions and a faster recovery.

It is important to realize that even with the prophylactic gastropexy procedure your dog can still experience bloat; however (s)he can no longer have the life threatening twist of the stomach.