

Identifying Bloat

Objective: Understanding the medical emergency - Bloat.

Content: Bloat, also known as gastric dilation-volvulus (or GDV), is a medical and surgical emergency that can present itself in the daycare and boarding environments. This condition is deadly in about 30% of dogs that it affects, even after extremely intensive medical treatment. To make your center a safer place for pets to be, take some time with your team to review the facts around bloat.

Prior to Lunch & Learn Session:

- Tip! This is a great lunch & learn to delegate to a team member to prepare and present.
- In preparation for leading the group discussion, the leader should review the supporting document section to determine what information will be utilized and presented.
- Find a few examples of dogs experiencing bloat online. Print a couple photos to display to the entire team during the lunch & learn session. Videos would be great to show too!
- Review your current documentation on bloat and procedures on how to handle a suspected case.
- Collect some paper and pens for a quiz at the end.

During Lunch & Learn Session:

- Review information on bloat from the supporting documents section and your own resources.
- Review the pictures and videos you have collected showing examples of the condition.
- Discuss and document (if you haven't already) procedures for transportation to a veterinarian. Be sure to include how this transport would occur "after hours" or during the weekend.
- Pass out pens/paper and conclude the lesson with a simple quiz:
    - What is bloat?
    - What are some signs of bloat?
    - What types of dogs have the highest risk of developing the condition?
    - What should be done if bloat is suspected?
- Collect the answers and close the meeting. After the meeting, spend a few minutes reviewing the answers from the post test to ensure everyone has a good understanding of this important topic. Have a quick one-on-one review with anyone that had difficulty with the quiz.

Supporting Education Articles/Tools: The information below provides additional guidance on the topic and should be reviewed prior to and during the meeting:

What is Bloat?

Gastric dilation-volvulus (GDV) is commonly known as Bloat. It is not completely understood by veterinarians but in all cases, it is a medical and surgical emergency. Dogs experience bloat when the stomach twists, fills with air and causes pressure. This pressure prevents blood

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from properly circulating through the body and back to the heart. The gradual reduction in working blood volume causes the dog to go into shock or causes the stomach to rupture. Even a very mild case of bloat is an emergency and the dog will die if not treated. Most dogs will die of bloat if not treated in a few hours. ***A dog suspected to have bloat needs to be rushed to the vet immediately.**

What are the signs of Bloat?

- An enlargement of the dog's abdomen (belly)
- Retching (unsuccessful attempts at vomiting)
- Salivation (drooling)
- Restlessness
- Pain when pushing on the belly

How is Bloat Treated?

X-Rays and/or bloodwork is completed to confirm bloat. The only treatment for the condition is surgery. Vets will first treat the shock. Once stable, the dog can go into surgery for two procedures. The first deflates the stomach and turns it back to the correct position. The second part of the surgery is preventative in nature. Most dogs that experience bloat will have it again in their lifetime. Therefore, the stomach is typically tacked/sutured to the abdominal wall to prevent it from twisting again in the future. This is called gastropexy.

Who is more likely to get Bloat?

- Large and Giant Breeds
- Dogs with deep, narrow chests.
- Tall dogs (high height to width ratio)
- Males are twice as likely to bloat than females
- Risk increases as dogs age
- Dogs that have experienced bloat in the past
- Dogs with relatives that have experienced bloat
- Dogs fed once per day (rather than two times are twice as likely)
- Fast eaters
- Stressed or hyperactive dogs
- Anxious, unhappy or fearful are twice as likely than happy dogs

Common breeds that get Bloat

- Great Dane (this breed has the greatest risk)
- Basset Hound
- Boxer
- St. Bernard
- Weimaraner
- Irish Setter, Gordon Setter
- Standard Poodle
- Doberman Pinscher

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Can Bloat be prevented?

Research is not definitive on preventing bloat but certain recommendations do exist:

- Feeding multiple small meals rather than one large meal per day.
- Slowing down "fast" eaters or "gulpers"
- Constant access to water
- Reducing stress (especially around mealtime)

*This information is collected from a series of sources. We encourage you to do your own research to supplement the information as it is not intended to be all encompassing and many facts are still unknown about bloat.

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