

Belly Aches to Bloat: Common Health Issues in Pet Care

Objective: Understanding the common illness/injury that can occur in pet care.

Content: There are several illnesses that can be present when animals are in the hands of a pet care provider. Dogs can bloat, cats can develop respiratory issues and the list goes on and on. Having the ability to identify the signs and symptoms of the most common issues is vital. This knowledge helps you to seek the services of a veterinarian whenever it may be necessary and in a timely manner. As such the lives of your canine and feline guests won't be in jeopardy. This activity will focus on discussing the top 5 most common diseases that are likely to impact your pet care business. *

This is a great LnL to delegate to a team member or two to prepare and present.

Prior to Lunch & Learn Session:

- Determine 5 common illnesses or injuries that you encounter in your pet care business. Assign team members to do research on these topics. Team members can use the sample outline found in the Supporting Documents Section of this LnL.
- Find a few examples of dogs experiencing the illness or injury 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 these injuries and illnesses. If necessary, this is a great time to update your health procedures.

*Tip! Address serious health issues but don't forget the common, simple ones too! For example, dog walkers need to know about Bloat, but they also should know the basics on paw punctures.

During Lunch & Learn Session:

- Have your team members present the information they researched on each topic.
- Review the pictures and videos collected showing examples of the condition.
- Discuss and document (if you haven't already) procedures for the most critical illnesses/injuries.
- Close with a Q and A from the rest of the team.

Supporting Documents: The information below provides additional guidance on the topic and should be reviewed prior to and during the meeting:

Need Topic Ideas? Check out the resources below:
All About Dog Daycare by Robin Bennet: Chapter 8
Dog First Aid by American Red Cross: Chapter 6

Sample Research Topic:

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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 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

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- St. Bernard
- Weimaraner
- Irish Setter, Gordon Setter
- Standard Poodle
- Doberman Pinscher

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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