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Gastric Dilation Volvulus

(Other names: Bloat, GDV, gastric torsion, Stomach torsion, twisted stomach)

Gastric dilation volvulus, or GDV, is a life-threatening condition that affects dogs. When GDV occurs, a dog's stomach expands with food and gas and then turns on itself, cutting off blood flow to the stomach and restricts the pet's ability to vomit. The more time that passes with GDV, the more life threatening the condition becomes. Dogs that get GDV often show signs of restlessness, drooling, retching, and distended abdomen. As the disease progresses, animals may collapse and be weak. If any of these signs are seen with your pet, he or she should be evaluated by your veterinarian immediately. Secondary complications can occur, including vital organ damage due to poor oxygen delivery, cardiac arrhythmias, and life-threatening systemic infection. GDV typically affects large breed and deep-chested dogs. However, GDV can affect any breed of dog. Common breeds affected are Great Danes, Weimaraners, St. Bernards, Irish Setters and Gordon Setters. Even though these large, deep-chested breeds are those most commonly affected, GDV has been reported in almost every breed of dog. Genetics also play a role and research shows that dogs with relatives that have had GDV are at a higher predisposition of GDV. This condition also seems to affect older dogs and has been associated with dogs that receive only one large meal a day.

Diagnostics & Treatment: The best way to diagnose bloat is to take an x-ray of your dog's abdomen. Other diagnostics your veterinarian may want to perform include bloodwork to assess how stable your pet is and an electrocardiogram to evaluate for arrhythmias. Surgery is necessary to correct GDV. Usually an animal needs to be stabilized prior to surgery with intravenous fluids and other methods such as attempt to pass a stomach tube to relieve the gas distension in the stomach. Your veterinarian may even perform a procedure prior to surgery called trocharization, where they relieve the gas pressure of the stomach by inserting a needle or catheter into the stomach through the body wall. Once your pet is stabilized your veterinarian will take him or her to surgery, correct the volvulus and then perform a gastropexy (stomach sutured to body wall) in attempts to prevent future recurrence of GDV. Oftentimes the spleen, sections of the stomach, and other areas of the GI tract can be permanently injured and may be necessary to surgically remove these affected areas. After the entire abdomen has been assessed, the surgeon will then perform a gastropexy (mentioned above).

Prognosis and after-care: Often times animals need to be hospitalized for several days after surgery to be monitored and evaluated for secondary complications and other post-operative complications. Immediate postoperative care typically consists of exercise restriction to allow the incision to heal. Long term recommendations include feeding multiple, small meals per day instead of one large meal and continued monitoring for recurrence. Mortality rates associated with GDV are approximately 15%, and mortality and complication rates increase as the time to treat and severity increase. Ultimately, stabilization and surgery have the best outcomes when performed as soon as possible and early in course of the condition.

Treatment Options:

Estimated Cost: \$6,000 - \$7,200

Recommended treatment: Diagnostics, Surgery, & 2-4 days hospitalization

Price includes: Initial exam, x-rays, bloodwork, de-rotation and gastropexy surgery, IV catheter and fluids, pain medications, antibiotics, hospitalization (2 days), ECG monitoring, and go home medications.

****Additional hospitalization may be required if complications arise during surgery, or based on individual patient response to post-operative care even with an uneventful surgery. Each additional day of hospitalization ranges \$900-\$1,200.**

Euthanasia:

Estimated cost: \$194 - \$404

Considered the appropriate choice if not responding to treatment, or if unable to provide care.