

Kaycee's LifeBowl™ Reduces Risk of Bloat



By Elizabeth Chandler

Have you ever heard of gastric dilatation-volvulus? How about its common name, “bloat”? Bloat, also known as twisted stomach, is a leading cause of canine death, following cancer. But, unlike cancer, some bloat instances can be avoided by knowledge of the causes and by awareness of the symptoms. If not treated with the utmost urgency (i.e., emergency medical care, involving fairly expensive surgery) at the onset of symptoms, survival of bloat is very rare. Even if symptoms are recognized immediately and emergency surgery is performed, there is only a moderate survival rate.

Bloat occurs when the stomach becomes severely expanded due to the accumulation of fluids, food, and air in the digestive tract. This often causes the stomach to twist over on itself, effectively shutting down the entrance to and exit from the stomach cavity. This can result in the buildup of toxins in the stomach which can cause stomach rupture and an infection of the stomach cavity. In addition, the twisting of the stomach compresses a major artery and decreases blood flow, causing an irregular heartbeat in many cases. Other internal organs may also be affected as a result of the decreased blood flow. Because these changes can happen so quickly, a case of bloat can result in death in just a few hours.

The following can be signs of bloat (but don't waste precious time self-diagnosing; get your dog to a veterinarian right away): Distended, gas-filled stomach (usually very hard and painful to the touch); attempts to vomit without success; whining; excessive salivation; difficulty breathing; rapid heartbeat; and signs of shock (pale gums, shallow rapid breathing, cold skin, weakness, fast pulse, and loss of consciousness). **If you suspect bloat, take your dog to a veterinarian or emergency clinic immediately.**

Overly aggressive eating behavior is one of the leading causes of bloat. Other causes associated with bloat, in addition to gulping down food, are drinking excessive water before or after eating and exercising immediately before or after eating. In addition, new evidence suggests that frequency of feeding is key to reducing the risk of bloat; that is, dogs that eat smaller meals several times a day are less likely to bloat than dogs that eat only once a day.

Age (the most frequently reported ages for bloat cases is 4-10 years), a dog's tendency to be stressed, and certain breeds of dogs (anatomically deep-chested) are also associated with being at a higher bloat risk. Some of the high at-risk breeds include (but are not limited to): Great Dane, German Shepherd, Standard Poodle, Rottweiler, Akita, Bloodhound, Irish Setter, Golden Retriever, Irish Wolfhound, Labrador, and Newfoundland, and smaller breeds such as Dachshund, Basset Hound, Airedale Terrier, and Beagle.

What can you do to help avoid bloat? While there is no real proof that any of these suggestions guarantee that your dog will not bloat, these are generally thought to be good protocols to follow:

- Feed your dog several small meals a day rather than one or two large meals.
- Keep your dog from vigorous exercise one hour before and two hours after eating.
- Don't allow your dog to drink large amounts of water before and after eating.
- Know your dog's normal behavior, so that you can quickly recognize if there is a problem.
- Keep the location, hours, and phone number of an emergency veterinary clinic handy.
- Teach your dog to eat slowly. For families with multiple dogs, feed them in separate rooms so that they don't feel the need to eat quickly.

Holisticforpets.com carries Kaycee's LifeBowl™, designed to encourage dogs to eat at a slower rate to minimize gulping. This reduces the excessive air intake accompanied with eating too rapidly and, therefore, helps to reduce the risk of bloat. The center upright design of Kaycee's LifeBowl™ forces your dog to pick and choose while eating. As a result, your dog will have to eat more slowly while working around the LifeBowl. You can go to:

<http://www.safetyobediencepetproducts.com/LifeBowls.html> to view a brief video showing how the LifeBowl helps to reduce gulping. Also, at that web address, the makers of Kaycee's LifeBowl™ share the harrowing tale of Kaycee's (their beloved Irish Setter) life threatening run-in with bloat (she survived).

Holisticforpets.com offers two sizes of Kaycee's LifeBowl™ (Large/X-Large & Small/Medium) in two colors: Aquamarine and Brown. (Acknowledgment to Green Oaks North Pet Hospital in Texas and their web information located at

<http://www.greenoaksnorthvets.com/medical/caninebloat.html> for some of the information in this article.)