

Gastric Dilatation Volvulus (GDV), a.k.a. Bloat

Research primarily at Purdue University by Dr. Larry Glickman, VMD, Ph.D, (an AKC Excellence in Canine Research Award winner), and Dr. Malathi Raghavan, DVM, Ph.D. has identified a number of feeding management and dietary factors that increase the risk of GDV. These include eating only one meal a day, feeding only dry dog food, feeding food with only small particles, and feeding a large volume of food per meal. Other feeding factors found to increase the risk of GDV were eating rapidly, increased physical activity before and after eating, restricting a dog's water intake before and after eating, moistening dry food before feeding, and eating from a raised feeding bowl. Thus, some of the recommendations commonly made to prevent GDV were shown by the research to actually increase the risk of GDV. In the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, Vol. 17, No. 10, Glickman wrote, "In addition, in univariate analyses, many of the recommendations commonly made to prevent GDV, such as raising the food bowl, moistening dry food prior to feeding, and restricting water intake before and after feeding, were associated with a significantly increased risk of GDV."

THE LATEST RESEARCH

Recent research, not yet published, has shown an increased risk of GDV in dogs who consumed dry foods containing fat among the first four ingredients, and an increased risk in dogs who consumed dry foods listing citric acid as a preservative – with this risk rising when foods with citric acid were moistened. Although not statistically significant, researchers found that a modest increase in risk of GDV was seen with the consumption of dry foods that listed more than one corn ingredient among the first four label ingredients, while in contrast, a pattern was observed of decreased GDV risk with an increasing number of protein ingredients of animal origin, including beef, poultry, lamb, and fish among the first four ingredients.

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Feed two or more meals a day.
- Feed no more than one cup per 33 pounds of body weight per meal when feeding two meals a day.
- Feed an energy-dense diet, to reduce volume, but avoid a diet where a high amount of calories are from fats.
- Feed a variety of different food types regularly. The inclusion of human foods in a primarily dry dog food diet was associated with a 59 percent decreased risk of GDV while inclusion of canned pet foods was associated with a 28 percent decreased risk.
- When feeding dry food, also include foods with sufficient amounts of meats and meat meals, for example: beef, lamb, poultry, and fish.
- Feed a food with larger particles, and include larger pieces of meat to the diet.
- Avoid moistening dry foods.
- If your dog eats rapidly, find ways to try to reduce his speed of eating.
- Avoid raising the food bowl – place it at ground level.
- Try to minimize stress for your dog. Stressful events have been reported to be precipitating factors in GDV occurrence.
- Restrict vigorous exercise one hour before and two hours after meals.
- When you are not in close proximity to your dog, use a baby monitor to alert you if your dog is in distress.
- Learn to recognize signs of GDV, which include pacing and restlessness, head turning to look at the abdomen, distention of the abdomen, rapid shallow breathing, nonproductive attempts at vomiting, and salivation. These symptoms can progress rapidly to shock and death. Get to your veterinarian or emergency hospital the moment you suspect GDV.