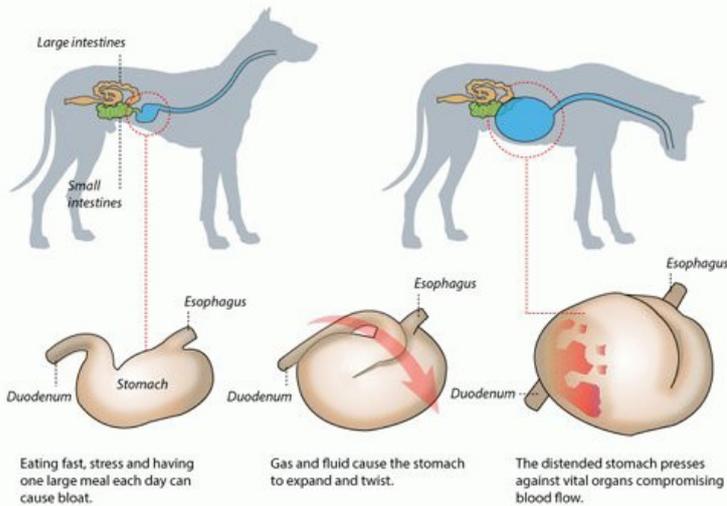


What is Gastric Dilation and Volvulus?

Gastric Dilation, often known as 'bloat', is the accumulation of gas, food, fluid, foam, or any combination of these, within the stomach of the greyhound.

Gastric Dilation Volvulus (GDV) is where a dilated or bloated stomach rotates up to 360 degrees, often cutting off blood supply to the stomach and spleen and putting pressure on essential blood supply to other parts of the body.



Signs and symptoms

Early stage symptoms include

- Lethargy/depression
 - Lazier or quieter than usual
 - Change in behaviour
- Inappetence or decreased intake of food
- Distended abdomen (not always visible)
- Continual lip licking
- Excessive salivating
- Increased water intake
- Abnormal "tucked up" or "hunched" appearance



More serious signs

- Vomiting
- Straining to defecate
- Retching or gagging unproductively
- Dark red gums initially then progressing to pale/white gums
- Collapse (usually in back end initially) and death

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Predisposing/Risk factors

- Deep chested breeds, such as greyhounds
- Rapid ingestion of food or water (fast eaters)
- Exercise immediately before or after eating
- Ingestion of rapidly digested or highly processed kibble (gaseous formation)
- Sudden change in diet
- Lower body weight
- Hereditary (may be linked if a first degree relative has been previously affected)
- Kennelled dogs

GASTRIC DILATION AND GASTRIC DILATION VOLVULUS

Treatment

A GDV is a veterinary EMERGENCY! If you suspect the condition, do not delay or wait for further signs or symptoms- the longer the wait, the higher the risk and poorer the prognosis. Take the greyhound to an emergency veterinarian immediately. A study found a 28.6% mortality in dilation/bloat cases presented to veterinarians and 33.3% for volvulus. Contact the veterinary clinic before/during transit and warn the clinic that you believe your greyhound may have dilation or volvulus, therefore allowing them to prepare for emergency surgery if required.

Your veterinarian can confirm this diagnosis quickly with x-rays.

Depending on the cause, gastric dilation may be resolved by passing a stomach tube and pumping the stomach contents out under a general anaesthetic. This is a risky procedure and occasional stomach ruptures do occur.

Emergency surgery or humane euthanasia are usually the only treatment options for a GDV. Even with surgery, the mortality and morbidity rates for GDVs is high, due to electrolyte imbalances and inadequate oxygenation of tissues from the restricted blood supply which can lead to tissue/organ damage, rupture and sepsis.

Prevention

There is no 100% preventative for gastric dilation or GDV, but several steps can be taken to minimise risk:

- Increased feeding frequency and decreasing feed sizes. Try to aim for 3 small equal sized meals throughout the day or 2 equal sized meals at a minimum
- Increase feed consumption time, slow-eating bowls can be used as an aid

- Gradual changes in diet, over 7 to 10 days. This includes changes in kibble brands/products and changes from higher or lower fat content meats. This can be achieved by the following guide:
 - Day 1 and 2: 25% new diet 75% old diet
 - Day 3 and 4: 50% new diet 50% old diet
 - Day 5 and 6: 75% new diet 25% old diet
 - Day 7 and beyond: 100% new diet.
- Not exercising an hour before or after eating
- Minimise stressful events and slowly educate puppies to adapt to potential stressors from a young age.
- Access to good quality water, but not large amounts consumed rapidly. This can be achieved by having small water bowls/buckets and monitoring how much water is consumed post-exercise and only refilling gradually over the next hour post-exercise.
- Do not force water down the greyhounds' throat after exercise, such as with a hose.
- Allowing the greyhound to cool down, via walking slowly, until the panting has decreased.
- Feeding as close to the ground as possible by having the bowl directly on the floor of the kennel.
- Gastropexy (surgically attaching the stomach to the inside wall of the abdomen) - prophylactic surgery which can be done to minimise the risk of a volvulus incidence. This procedure prevents the stomach from being able to twist or rotate. A gastropexy is usually performed after an incident of GDV. This prophylactic procedure can often be completed when surgeries such as de-sexing or dentals are performed under general anaesthesia. Discuss this option with your veterinarian.

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