Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus (GDV)

Gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV) is a condition that starts off with distention of the stomach with food, fluid such as water, or air due to excessive swallowing. The stomach twists in a clockwise direction as it becomes distended. The inlet to the stomach from the esophagus and the outlet leading into the duodenum get kinked off and the food, fluids and air cannot pass in either direction. As a result, unproductive retching occurs.

Gastric Dilatation

When the stomach dilates and maintains its normal position, the condition is known as gastric dilatation. Gastric dilatation can occur in any dog, and is quite common among young puppies that overeat.

Dogs are usually able to relieve the built up pressure in their stomachs by vomiting or by belching. When belching and vomiting don't provide relief, emergency treatment similar to that for GDV may be necessary. It may be difficult to determine whether a dog is experiencing simple dilatation, or dilatation and volvulus until x-rays of the stomach are taken. Airedale owners should be cautious if their dog experiences bouts of gastric dilatation.

Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus

In gastric dilatation and volvulus, the stomach rolls, or twists, closing off the openings leading in from the esophagus and out to the intestines. This prevents the dog from vomiting or belching (one of the most common symptoms of GDV is nonproductive retching). Sometimes the word torsion is used to describe the twisting. Torsion prevents outflow from the stomach by closing off the pylorus, the opening from the stomach to the duodenum.

If the stomach twists enough, the spleen and major blood vessels in the area twist as well. Twisted blood vessels cause a loss of blood flow (ischemia) to the stomach and other abdominal organs that can cause considerable tissue damage. When blood flow returns, the damaged cellular material from the traumatized tissues is released into the blood and can be harmful to other organs.

When the blood supply in the abdomen's major arteries is cut off, blood flow to the heart and cardiac output decrease, leading to low blood pressure, and eventually, shock. Shock occurs when organs do not get enough blood and is usually severe.

In some cases, the stomach ruptures from the buildup of pressure and leads to life-threatening peritonitis (inflammation of the peritoneum, the membrane that lines the abdominal cavity).

Complications

GDV is a medical emergency, and treatment should begin as soon as possible. The sooner your Airedale is treated, the greater its chance of survival. Complications include:

- Arrhythmias (irregular heartbeat) due to the decreased blood flow back to the heart.
- Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation (DIC), a blood clotting disorder that leads to diffuse bleeding, pain, and seizures.

Prevention

An Airedale that eats and drinks quickly can avoid the risk of bloat in the following ways:

- Minimizing stress especially during the intake phase of a rescue (gradual phase-in to a household environment and routine).
- Eating small portions throughout the day
- Waiting 1 to 2 hours after eating before exercising and exercising (at least initially) in a controlled, on-leash environment.

How to identify GDV

There are a number of telltale signs of bloat:

1. **OBVIOUS DISCOMFORT.** Constantly searching for a comfortable spot.
2. **DRY WRETCHING.** Vomiting with no results.
3. **DISTENDED ABDOMEN.** Visible signs of bloating and a hard, drum-like feel to the abdomen.
4. **LETHARGY.** A normally energetic Airedale becomes lethargic.

What else should I know?

If your Airedale has bloat every minute is precious. Proceed immediately to an emergency care facility. Provide room in your vehicle because the twisted stomach and increasing pressure on the abdomen will cause pain and your Airedale will be searching for a comfortable position.

Call ahead to the emergency care facility – let them know you are coming. Be prepared to stretcher or board-lift your Airedale into the facility because they may not be able to walk when you get there.

Remember - prevention of GDV is the safest cure.

On March 13th 2004, Rufus, a 4 ½ -year old RMARC rescue Airedale suffered GDV. Again on July 5th 2006 we lost Rascal, a 7-year old male rescue Airedale.

Despite the heroic efforts of these dog's foster parents and the skilled doctors at the Colorado Springs Animal Emergency Care Center and the Arapahoe Animal Hospital in Boulder, both dogs died from post GDV complications. This information pamphlet is provided to the Airedale rescue and owner community to educate owners and foster families in the recognition and prevention of this deadly disease.

Portions of the medical information contained in this pamphlet has been obtained from the Animal Health Channel (animalhelathchannel.com)
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Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus also known as

Bloat

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