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From: lissa [lissa@lissa.net]
Sent: Saturday, February 19, 2005 12:22 PM
To: ExtMAGDRL@yahoo.com
Subject: [ExtMAGDRL] DOE Topic #13: Minimally Invasive Gastropexy

Hi All,

This week's Dog Owner Education topic #13 covers the new approach to preventing a life-threatening health issue for Great Danes: Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus (GDV), commonly referred to as bloat.

A recent Purdue University study on bloat was showcased in the January 2005 edition of Whole Dog Journal, but it did not focus on Great Danes. Yet according to the Glickman studies at Purdue University, "Great Danes have a higher lifetime risk of developing GDV (42%) and of dying (13%)." Most of us follow the preventive regimen recommended by Siefried Zahn D.V.M in "Bloat in Large Dogs" Published by Univelt, Inc. 1983 (ISBN 0-912183-00-4):

1. Feed dogs two or three times daily, rather than once a day, and at times when someone can observe them after they have eaten.
2. Avoid vigorous exercise, excitement and stress one hour before and two hours after feeding. Walking is okay because it helps stimulate normal gastrointestinal function.
3. Feed dogs individually and in a quiet location.
4. Make diet changes gradually over a 3-5 day period.
5. Ensure that water is always available but limit the amount immediately before/after feeding (NOTE: this recommendation was recently challenged in the Purdue study.)
6. Establish a good relationship with a veterinarian. Discuss emergency procedures and options for preventative surgery.
7. Identify your nearest emergency vet clinic and contact them before an emergency arises to ask if they handle bloat emergencies in Great Danes.
8. Watch for any actions or behaviors that may signal abdominal discomfort (abdominal fullness, pacing, salivating, whining, getting up and lying down, stretching, looking at abdomen, anxiety and unsuccessful attempts to vomit, etc.) Keep an over-the-counter anti-gas medication on-hand and immediately administer it if these symptoms occur, then rush your dog to the nearest veterinary facility.

The most important variable in whether a Dane survives bloat is time. With fast and aggressive treatment and proper surgery and follow-up care, the survival rate averages 60-70%.

That said, studies show that despite taking these precautions, Danes with a nervous temperament or who are stressed are more prone to bloat; Danes with a 1st degree relative that bloated are more prone to bloat; over-heated Danes are prone to bloat; Danes that over-eat are more prone to bloat; Danes that have bloated in the past are likely to bloat again; Danes with other health problems are more prone to bloat; Danes with a diet high in grain (especially corn) are more prone to bloat; and there are a host of other contributing factors.

Many of us have researched prophylactic measures to prevent bloat, but if you're like me, you hesitate to put your Dane through the major preventative surgical procedure called "open gastropexy." This surgery entails opening the belly area and tacking the stomach to the ribs to prevent twisting. Although gastropexy is often done after a bloat incident

and may prevent future GDV, there is no guarantee that the spleen or intestines will not torsion or the tacking will not weaken over time; and the surgery itself is not without risks. Nevertheless, prophylactic gastropexy is considered the best preventive surgical approach.

Several surgical techniques used in open gastropexy are covered here: <http://members.fortunecity.com/houndfancy/procon.html> However within the past year, a new minimally invasive approach to gastropexy using a laparoscope was developed at the University of Georgia. I've provided a summary of the pros/cons of the new laparoscopic procedure here:

Minimally Invasive Gastropexy - a Preventative Procedure

By Daniel A. Degner, DVM, Diplomate ACVS

(full presentation here:

http://www.vetsurgerycentral.com/proph_gastropexy.htm)

Indications

* Gastric volvulus and dilation (GDV) or bloat is a common life-threatening condition that affects many large breeds of dogs; for information on GDV look at GDV web page. This condition involves distention of the stomach usually with gas and twisting of the stomach

* Breeds that are most susceptible to GDV and should be considered for the preventative procedure:

- Great Danes
- Irish Wolfhounds
- German Shepherds
- Standard Poodles
- Blood Hounds

Laparoscopic surgery

* A procedure called a gastropexy can be done to tack the stomach to right side of the stomach to the right body wall using minimally invasive surgery

* A laparoscope is inserted into the belly cavity

* An instrument port is made on the front right side of the abdomen and the right side of the stomach is picked up with a laparoscopic instrument

* The instrument port incision is enlarged to 1 1/2 inches and the stomach is sutured to the right body wall

Benefits of the laparoscopic surgery over open surgery

- * Shorter surgery and anesthesia time
- * Minimally invasive
- * Two small incisions therefore less scaring
- * Less pain
- * Quicker recovery
- * Prevents life-threatening twist of stomach
- * Less expensive than treating life-threatening GDV
- * Patient can go home on the day of the procedure

According to a study presented at a World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) conference (in summary), because of the low incidence of postoperative complications and the prompt recovery of patients, laparoscopic gastropexy is a valid alternative to the traditional prophylactic open gastropexy. A disadvantage of this procedure is it requires a longer operating time, and high risk patients would benefit of shorter anesthesia and surgery time.

<http://www.vin.com/proceedings/Proceedings.plx?CID=WSAVA2002&PID=2753>)

Average Cost: \$1500 to \$1700 (Note: If your Dane bloats, expect to pay up to twice that much!) Of note, VA-MD Regional College of Veterinary Medicine in Blacksburg, VA (affiliated with Virginia Tech and University of Maryland schools of Veterinary Medicine) does the minimally invasive gastropexy, and the cost is \$800 -- \$1200. Their web site is here: <http://www.vetmed.vt.edu/>

Here are some web sites with additional information on minimally invasive laparoscopic gastropexy:

University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine (originators of this technique): <http://www.vet.uga.edu/mis/cases/derby.php> and a host of links about laparoscopic procedures are posted here:
<http://www.vet.uga.edu/mis/links.php>

University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine:
<http://www2.vetmed.wisc.edu/oncall/story.php?id=85&type=features&pos=0>

Endoscopy Case Study Courtesy of Clarence Rawlings, DVM, PhD, Diplomate ACVS
College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Georgia:
http://www.karlstorzvet.com/casestudy/laparoscopic_correction.html

And as always, thanks for educating yourself to benefit dogs and their owners!

Lissa Scott
AKC Canine Good Citizen Evaluator
MD/DC Adoption Screens & Events
Mid-Atlantic Great Dane Rescue League
<http://www.magdrl.org>

"A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself." - Josh Billings

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