

AWMA Magazine

Quarterly Magazine for Members of the American Working Malinois Association

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The VPG/IPO Helper Correct Sleeve Presentation

Part 2

By Les Flores

It appears that in recent trials the judges have seen several helpers give a wrong presentation causing the dogs to get a grip or a grip that is under or below the bite bar.

Fail-Safe Ways For The Helper To Catch a Dog

Fail-Safe is a technique that allows the helper and dog to achieve optimum performance in protection work. This work takes advantage of the least point of resistance to the dog at the time of impact. It is based on the position of the feet, the arm presentation and the most advantageous sleeve angle of the bite bar shown to the dog so that the catch may be made without incident. This technique is used when performing the attack out of the back transport and the courage test. If you are a helper that does breed surveys, it is also used when coming out of the blind for the attack on handler.

As the helper approaches the dog, several things happen prior to, during and after contact takes place. Prior to contact, a left armed helper must stand with the right foot slightly in front, knees slightly bent to absorb the impact, and the sleeve pre-positioned at the angle appropriate for the dog to make contact. The sleeve angle must be slightly up at the end and with the elbow held away from the body. The sleeve must not touch the helper's body but should be approximately four to five inches away. The helper's foot position allows the dog to commit to the sleeve side and, by having the sleeve slightly away from the body, creates a Fail-Safe area for the dog. As the dog is coming to the grip, the bite bar should be at the same angle as the dog as he approaches. This is accomplished by placing the end of the sleeve slightly higher than the elbow. The space between the helper's body and the sleeve creates a cushion when the dog hits, prompting the helper to give in and turn. Instinctively, the dog will move to the least point of resistance which assist the helper to catch with a fluid motion, move the dog to the proper side and begin the drive.

Eight out of ten dogs will bite the center of the sleeve with this presentation. However, there are always exceptions. Some dogs will attempt to move the helper away from the drive. These dogs will either hit the end or the elbow side of the sleeve or they may submarine and hit the protection arm at a lower angle than the center punch dog.

By performing the four steps of the Fail Safe maneuver, it will not matter where the dog hits the arm. Each of the described position pieces, when put together, will assist the helper to work the dog into the correct drive.

Suppose a dog hits the helper on the non-sleeve side. By using the Fail-Safe position technique, even when the inertia moves the man in the opposite direction, the helper is still able to move with the dog as it strikes the sleeve. The four to five inch cushion space from the helper's body provides the opportunity to pivot and suck the charging dog. This avoids a collision that can have dire consequences for both the helper and the dog. The same technique may be used for a dog that submarines. By lowering the angle of the bite bar, the dog will have an opportunity for a full-mouthed grip. A word of caution: It is the angle of the bite bar that is lowered, not the sleeve.

After the dog strikes the arm, the helper must follow through. The drive should come easily with the correct positioning of the arm and angle of the bite bar. The helper may smoothly move the dog into the pocket and begin the drive without problems.

There are times, however, when things do not go as planned. This can create some interesting situations since, as trial helpers, we must still complete the work for the judge to properly evaluate the dog. What is a helper to do when things get messy in a trial?

In an ideal situation, the sleeve is in the correct position, the angle of the bite bar is presented for a full grip in the center of the arm and the Fail-Safe positioning is now performed without thinking. As the dog strikes the arm and the inertia takes the man and the dog to the least point of resistance the helper may start the drive without problems.

Two things can happen during this scenario. One, as soon as the dog hits, the momentum will carry the helper in to the drive. In this case, the dog will move the man 180 to 360 degrees, depending in how strong and fast the dog hits. This is the easiest way to accomplish the drive. Or two, as soon as the dog hits and the impact is absorbed correctly, a helper may set the dog on the ground, wait a fraction of a second until the dog gathers itself and pushes upward. This would allow the helper to use the dog's pause to bend his knees for added strength and the upward movement to begin the drive.

Let us assume for a moment that the helper turns for the attack out of the back transport. The dog hits on the opposite of where the helper intended to take the dog. Keep in mind, that what we are showing the dog is a target for the least point of resistance. However, the dog may choose to take the helper in another direction. If this happens, the helper must absorb the hit to avoid injury and then place the dog in the pocket to conduct the proper drive. Depending on the power of the dog and his inertia, the helper has an option. If the dog hits the end of the sleeve, the helper may move his upper body as well as his leg out of the way to avoid the collision. The helper may set the dog down and then use the dog's movement upward to proceed with the drive. This technique also applies on the courage test and the attack on handler when the helper steps out of the blind in the breed survey protection phase.

Another variable to consider is the height of the sleeve when presented to the dog just prior to the strike. This position is most prominent in the courage test exercise of the protection routine. The higher the sleeve is from the ground, the easier it is for the strong, fast dog to be flown by the helper on the follow through. This can also cause poor grips and has been known to lead to unfortunate injuries for the dog. Although the spectators at VPG/IPO trials always like to see a fast, powerful dog be caught this way, it is unsafe for both the dog and the helper. The potential consequences are far too great for such a short-live thrill and should be diligently avoided.

To avoid this type of catch, the helper may use the Fail-Safe technique. As the dog strikes the sleeve, the helper's elbow is in a lower position than his hand. If he then uses the momentum of the dog to move the sleeve in a downward arc, this will prevent the dog from flying.

Drives: Running, Skip or Mixed

As for the drive itself, there are several types to consider. Some helpers prefer the running drive, others the skip drive and some are more comfortable performing a combination of both. The best drive is the one that will show the judge the dog's grip, reaction to the stick hits and ability to withstand the pressure posed by the helper. Arguments regarding one technique over another are as diverse as dogs themselves.

A problem in the Schutzhund world is that some helpers are only taught the high elbowed running drive, because it places more pressure on the dog. This conclusion is obtained because the dog's front feet are off the ground and he is challenged at his weakest point. In contrast, some organizations want helpers to perform the skip drive because this places the helper over the dog applying pressure not only with

the stick hits but with the helper's body as well. Of course there are rebuttals in each ideology. Which approach is better is not the focus of this article. Both techniques have their own unique merits and weaknesses.

Problem Solving

First let us focus on the ideal drive. Suppose the dog's grip is in the center of the sleeve, the helper moves the dog in the pocket, the stick hits are taken without a problem, the dog stops when the helper stops and he outs cleanly. Not much to learn here.

In many instances, there are helpers who are physically powerful. They are able to manhandle the dog in the drive and make it look smooth. However, there are helpers that do not have the upper body strength to accomplish such drive. These helpers must resort to technique rather than brute force.

A situation where technique would be important is when a dog grips the end of the sleeve. In order to start a correct drive, the helper must change his center of balance in order to bring the dog into the pocket. In this instance, bringing the elbow high in the drive will work. By changing the balance to the front, the helper is able to center the dog in the pocket and then use his legs for the drive.

Another example of technique over brawn is a dog that grips the elbow side of the sleeve. Of course, the elbow high technique would not work here because the center of balance would be in favor of the dog, not the helper. The helper must bring the sleeve close and tight and curl the arm in to the center of his body. Although the dog may attempt to pull away from the helper while performing the drive, this technique puts the helper in control.

Helper trial rules define that the helper, after driving the dog, must face the handler; the stick must be hidden from view and he must stand in a non-threatening passive stance. Additionally, the sleeve must be relaxed and rested in a diagonal angle.

What this is describing is that the helper's stance and presence should be the same as it was in the blind during the hold and bark. Many helpers try to interpret their own variations of this rule. However, rules are rules and they must be followed. As was stated earlier, techniques change from helper to helper but the end result should be the same.

These are but some of the techniques that are used by helpers to get out of trouble. Most of this is taught in helper seminars through out the country.

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(Les Flores has been selected as the back half helper at several Regional Championships in the Pacific Northwest and the Northwestern Region for the past 10 years. He was also selected as the back half helper of the H.O.T. Tournament in Washington State. Les has written several articles regarding helper work and some of his ideas are being used in some regions in Germany. Les has given over 100 seminars about trial helper work in USA and Canada and has certified over 120 helpers.)

2005 AWMA National Championship

By Tami Stephenson

This year's Malinois Championship, hosted by the Atlanta Working Dog Club, proved to be an event full of high competition, exciting performances, and it's shares of trials and tribulations. The lovely stadium field presented an excellent back drop on which our judges Nathaniel Roque/USA (tracking), Frank Mensing/ Canada (obedience), and Louis Quadroni/Switzerland (protection) could officiate. The judging was strict, and every point earned was well deserved.

Helpers Clark Niemitalo/front half (USA) and Kim Hechler/back half (Germany) were selected to work the trial, and proved to be safe and effective. As usual, there was strong controversy given the style of reattack by the back half helper, Kim Hechler, however most of the dogs were unaffected by this different style of work. The president has selected and appointed a new helper committee consisting of Les Flores, Nathaniel Roque, Ivan Balabanov and Mike Baker. It is with the utmost confidence that this newly appointed chairman of the helper committee, Les Flores, will step into the roll previously held by Joey Leigh, and establish a working helpers program for the AWMA.

On behalf of AWMA, I would like to extend my congratulations to this year's AWMA National Champion, Mike Morgan and his handler owned and trained dog, Bacchus v Drachenherz (Boy vom Hölzleswald x Baghira vom Falkenstock) with a score of 95-92-87. Bacchus turned in a lovely heeling performance, earning High Obedience at the end.

It should be noted that the championship title was nearly earned by long time supporter and founding member Ivan Balabanov and his homebred malinois Qenny ot Vitosha. Qenny and Ivan turned in a stellar performance scoring 96-96-95 until it was discovered that he made a costly error in having a toy on his self during the tracking phase, resulting in a disqualification from the trial. Let this be a reminder to all of us as handlers to please remember and respect the established rules set forth by the FCI. This error ultimately led to knocking Ivan's first place performance out of the position of National Champion. The disqualification was decided by the presiding tracking judge, and fully accepted by Ivan Balabanov as he realized his lapse in judgement.

Our Vice Champion this year, Cele Danner and Zozzo v Tessinij's (Clip vom Roten Falken x Tiny van de Berlex-Hoeve), turned in a respectable performance of 90-91-92, earning themselves the second position on this year's world team to Hungary. Cele and Zozzo had only months to prepare for this championship together, and proved that they are a valuable asset to our team. Cele, training director for Southern Illinois Police and SchH Club and AWDF Treasurer, has been involved in the sport for several years, and we are excited to welcome her to the malinois world!

Ronnie Weiss and Zohra v Tessinij's tied with Cele and Zozzo earning a score of 97-85-91, ultimately finishing in third place determined by the protection score, and high scoring female dog. Zohra is owned by Krystin Hildebrandt and presented by Ronnie Weiss. It is interesting to note that our second and third place performances were earned by littermates! Good job Ronnie.

Joe Moldovon and Argo pulled in a strong fourth place finish with a 271 and high tracking score of 98. It is unfortunate that this team is unable to represent us in Hungary due to registration recognition, but we would like to acknowledge their welcome participation in our championships. Other notable performances include Greg Doud and Flare (High Protection with 93 pts.).

The IPO II National Championship went to AWMA President Glenn Stephenson and Q'Ichiro Ot Vitosha. Ichi turned in a powerful protection performance, and is a littermate to Qenny Ot Vitosha (Turcodos vd Duvetorre x Sandy Van de Haantjeshoek). Bob Miller and Yukon du Belle Pratique also turned in nice B & C performances, but unfortunately had a "mali moment" on the track. We look forward to seeing Yukon and Bob next year as IPO III competitors and expect good things from this team.

Founding board member and membership chairperson Anne Camper and Beqka D'Ile du Chien (Aros D'Ile Du Chien x Dite Ot Vitosha) traveled all the way from MT to compete, earning the IPO I Championship title. Congratulations to Anne and Beqka!

We wish to thank the hosting club for their time and effort in pulling off the event, and hope to minimize many of the areas of concern encountered at this year's championship. As a young and growing organization it is normal to encounter problems, and we wish to thank those who take on the challenge of hosting a trial. In an effort to make next year's championship even better, we have implemented a National Championship and World Team committee at this year's General Board meeting consisting of Tami Stephenson, Dana Miller, Sabine Ernsting and Melissa Mason. This committee, chaired by Sabine Ernsting, will be responsible for recommending guidelines and procedures for hosting the nationals, in addition to more clearly defining the existing criteria. It is our hope that this will help future events run more smoothly.

Check the AWMA website for the final team selection to the World Championship (FMBB) trial to be held in Hungary in May '06. This national trial was one portion of the team selection process. While the first four team positions are selected from the national championship standings, there are still two (plus one alternate) positions to be earned via the point system. The team will be announced early '06 when the deadline for world championship declarations is announced.

In conclusion, the AWMA is looking forward to next year's championship trial to be held in West Virginia, hosted by the Podium Belgian Shepherd Working Dog Club. The website for the trial will be up and running well in advance of next year's championship trial.

Braggs & Wags...

Congratulations to Marion Franke & Brittany – Beauty du Chateau Schonwalde SchH3/FH – on their 2005 Pacific NW Regional FH Championship with a score of 96 points.



Marion Franke and Brittany - Pacific NW Regional FH Champions

A word from the Editor

Friday, December 16th, 2005

Hello all,

Once again, I would like to thank everyone who has volunteered to write articles and who has sent in pictures. This past October we had our 3rd annual AWMA Nationals. We are lucky enough to have a story about the competition written by Tami Stephenson. This issue was a difficult one for me to put together given my own recent relocation into the COLD state of Maine! But with the help of our website coordinator, Jona, it is finally ready.

Best wishes for a happy holiday season,

Desiree' Shaw
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Working Dogs in Iraq

Friday, December 16th, 2005

By Brett Simon

Our journey began in April of this year in Denver, Indiana at Vohne Liche Kennels. I arrived later than the other handlers and they were all out in the field training for the day. Bobby one of the trainers for Vohne Liche took me to one of the kennel buildings to introduce to the dog I would be taking to Iraq. I knew very little about the dog, just what we talked about while we were walking to get him out of his kennel.

Out came Mido, a mali, he did not look like your typical mali. He did not look athletic and was a little round about the middle to say it nicely. Bobby told me don't worry he is an excellent dog. So off we went for a walk while we were waiting for a ride to meet up with the other handlers. Mido just seemed to walk around aimlessly like he was on a walk in the park. I took him to the ob course and he did a few of the obstacles in the same manner like he was bored. I began to think to myself what is going on here with this mali. Where is the malinut that I am so used to, that being my retired dog Ulani van Joefarm aka Nitro.

Our ride showed up and we were taken to the training area where everyone was working their dogs. Mido took it all in stride and never seemed real interested in anything. Our team leader came over and said he was going to lay a track for us and for me to put the harness on Mido. Well here finally came the malinois breed I fell in love with. The harness went on and I had a different dog in my hands. He was pulling, jumping, and barking as I was getting him ready. I was relieved to see that he was ready to go. Mido tracked like he was made to do it, hunting like his life depended on it. We finished the track in record time and he got his reward. I took the harness off of Mido to walk back to the car, it was like a switch he went right back to just walking like nothing was going on. Our first explosives detection problem was next. I got Mido out of the crate to give him a short break, he just looked a few times at the other dogs that were barking and being busy and just went on about his business. We sat off to the side waiting for our turn to go. They called us to come out and I looked at Mido who was just lying there. I put his flat collar on that we use for detection work and the switch was turned on again. He about pulled my arm off going out to the problem area. I was just amazed at this little dog and how he could turn himself off and on. He worked the problem like a true mal, 100 mph and gave a 100 percent.

We finished our detection work and headed back to the kennel, where I was met by Bobby. He knew that I was not too sure about Mido when I left. He walked over to me with this big smile on his face and said I told you. I just smiled back and walked away with Mido.

Oh I forgot the bite work phase, same as before Mido just sat and watched the guy walk out onto the field like he watching the sun set. I gave him his apprehension command and that was all she wrote folks. Mido became a monster and took the guy all the way to the ground.

Here comes the sad part of the story, Mido was taken from me and given to another handler. It seemed that they matched up better for each other and they had a new dog for me. I was some what depressed at the proposition but if it was for the good of the mission then I was okay with it. I know this is a malinois magazine and the article is supposed to be about working a malinois in Iraq but they gave me a German shepherd for my new dog. I did not know what to do; I had been working a mal for over 6 years and fell in love with the breed. My heart sank at first but I knew that the trainers knew what they were doing.

So here comes Hugo, a big beautiful bi-color gsd, he walked around like he owned the place. One of the handlers in the group had worked him for a few days but things did not work out. I took Hugo for a walk to get to know each other. It was obvious from the start that this dog had been hanging around malinois to much because he thought he was one. A ton of energy, a ton of drive, and all business.

Hugo and I finished our training in Indiana and got on the plane for the long ride to Iraq where we would be assisting the army in finding explosives, weapons and track anyone that ran from them.

Once we arrived in Baghdad, it was obvious from the start that we had a lot of work to do with the dogs. The environment was like nothing they had been exposed to. All of the dogs took it in stride and made the transition to their new home fairly quickly. Our first few weeks of training were very short. The dogs were working in 120 degree weather, and tracking on hard desert ground. Now back in Indy Hugo was a tracking machine, defiantly an FH candidate with little work. I could hardly get him to track 20 yards with his nose to the ground. The scent was just gone so fast in the heat and Hugo was not acclimated to the heat yet. It took about 2-3 weeks to get him tracking again. Once he caught on in the new environment we were back to running long hard tracks and he worked them like a champion tracking dog. Hugo became our demo dog for any of the army personnel that came to see how we were doing before being deployed. It was such a nice feeling to just put the harness on and tell him to track knowing that he would do the job.

We were finally deployed to Mosul, Iraq the third largest city in the country with 1.6 million people living in the city and surrounding areas. Mosul is in the northern part of Iraq and was a completely different place than Baghdad. The first thing I noticed was there were trees and grass in Mosul unlike the very harsh desert conditions of Baghdad. I was relieved; thinking let someone run across that big green grass field that I saw near our base. I knew they would not have a chance to get away.

Our first day we were introduced to the commanders and they all immediately fell in love with this big goofy gsd at my side. I was told that we would be working with all three infantry companies on the base. Our main transportation would be a stryker, which is very similar to a tank. Our first mission was to take place the next day.

We loaded up on the stryker not knowing what to expect. Hugo became a lap dog, he kept leaning against me and pushing my hand with his head. He was not sure about all the people, the noises, the smells and just about everything. He just sat on top of me looking at me like what are you doing to me. Since neither of us had been out in the city we did not know what the environment would be like to work in. Once we arrived at our target the army did their thing and then the call came for Hugo and me. We jumped off the stryker and I got my first glimpse at our new working environment. It was not a pretty site; it is just like the pictures you see on the news. People were everywhere, garbage and sewage in the streets and trash lots bordered a lot of the streets. I thought "how is Hugo going to work in this environment?" There was no way to train for this before our arrival. I guess the thought never crossed Hugo's mind because he went right to work. The first object we searched was a large wooden container inside of a house. Hugo not knowing that he is a gsd and having hung out too long with all the mals just ran up to it and jumped right on top of the container and began searching even though he knew better than to have done that. He just looked at me like "hey we are working what is the problem."

Well that was the beginning of the end. We have been here now for almost 6 months going out 2 sometimes 3 times a day and working Hugo very hard out in the city and desert. Searching houses, buildings, farms, caves, and vehicles, I have lost count of how many searches we have been on since our first day. Hugo never gives up even when we have been out for hours on end. He is always ready to go, he might not be happy about all gunfire and explosions going off while we are working but he puts that

aside and works with all his heart. Hugo has done a lot of good work in Iraq and has made many weapons and explosive finds for the army that the insurgents have hidden. We have not had a chance to track anyone yet but he will be up to it if the opportunity comes up.

At the end of the day Hugo enjoys all the attention he gets from the soldiers we work with. As I sit and write this article Hugo keeps bringing me his toy and sets in my lap and waits patiently for me to throw it over and over again. Even though Hugo is a German Shepherd and I am a Malinois person forever, I was lucky enough to get a German Shepherd with the heart and attitude of a great Malinois.

Health Issues

Friday, December 16th, 2005

Bloat (Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus)

What is bloat?

Gastric dilatation-volvulus (GDV) is also known as “bloat,” “stomach torsion,” or “twisted stomach.” GDV is an extremely serious condition, and should be considered a life-threatening emergency when it occurs. Dogs can die of bloat within several hours. Even with treatment, as many as 25-33% of dogs with GDV die.

WHAT TYPES OF BLOAT ARE THERE?

GASTRIC DILATATION... is simply the expansion of the stomach due to the buildup of gas or material in the stomach.

GASTRIC VOLVULUS (TORSION)... is the condition where the stomach rotates (flips on its long axis) and thereby twists the esophagus and small intestine closed so there is no passage of stomach contents or gas in or out of the stomach.

The gastric dilatation is one part of the condition and the volvulus or torsion is the second part. In bloat, due to a number of different and sometimes unknown reasons, the stomach fills up with air and puts pressure on the other organs and diaphragm. This makes it difficult for the dog to breathe, and compresses large veins in the abdomen, thus preventing blood from returning to the heart. Filled with air, the stomach can easily rotate on itself, thus pinching off the blood supply. Once this rotation (volvulus) occurs and the blood supply is cut off, the stomach begins to die and the entire blood supply is disrupted and the animal's condition begins to deteriorate very rapidly. Not all dogs that have a gas buildup and resultant dilatation develop the more serious and life-threatening volvulus. However, almost all dogs that have a volvulus develop it as a result of a dilatation. GDV is a very serious and life-threatening condition. Understanding the signs, prevention, and need for prompt treatment will help reduce the risk of mortality if your dog develops this problem.

Genetics

In addition to breed predilection, there appears to be a genetic link to this disease. The incidence is closely correlated to the depth and width of the dog's chest. Several different genes from the parents determine these traits. If both parents have particularly deep and narrow chests, then it is highly likely that their offspring will have deep and narrow chests and the resulting problems that may go with it. This is why in particular breeds we see a higher incidence in certain lines, most likely because of that line's particular chest conformation.

Age

Dogs over 7 years of age are more than twice as likely to develop gastric dilatation and volvulus as those who are 2-4 years of age.

Gender

Male dogs are twice as likely to develop gastric dilatation and volvulus as females. Neutering does not appear to have an effect on the risk of GDV.

Eating habits

Dogs fed once a day are twice as likely to develop GDV as those fed twice a day. It appears that dogs that eat rapidly or exercise soon after a meal may also be at increased risk.

Temperament

Dogs that tend to be more nervous, anxious, or fearful appear to be at an increased risk of developing GDV.

What causes gastric dilatation and volvulus?

There is not one particular activity that leads to the development of GDV. It appears that it occurs as a combination of events. Studies of the stomach gas that occurs in dilatation have shown that it is similar to the composition of normal room air suggesting that the dilatation occurs as a result of swallowing air. All dogs, and people for that matter, swallow air, but normally we eructate (burp) and release this air and it is not a problem. For some reason that scientists have not yet determined, these dogs that develop bloat do not release this swallowed gas. There is currently several studies looking into what happens physiologically in these dogs that develop GDV.

What are the signs?

The most obvious signs are abdominal distention (swollen belly) and nonproductive vomiting (animal appears to be vomiting, but nothing comes up) and retching. Other signs include restlessness, abdominal pain, and rapid shallow breathing. Profuse salivation may indicate severe pain. If the dog's condition continues to deteriorate, especially if volvulus has occurred, the dog may go into shock and become pale, have a weak pulse, a rapid heart rate, and eventually collapse. A dog with gastric dilatation without volvulus can show all of these signs, but the more severe signs are likely to occur in dogs with both dilatation and volvulus.

Symptoms

Typical symptoms often include some (but not necessarily all) of the following, according to the links below. Unfortunately, from the onset of the first symptoms you have very little time (sometimes minutes, sometimes hours) to get immediate medical attention for your dog. Know your dog and know when it's not acting right.

Attempts to vomit (usually unsuccessful); may occur every 5-20 minutes

This seems to be one of the most common symptoms & has been referred to as the "hallmark symptom"

Doesn't act like usual self

Perhaps the earliest warning sign & may be the only sign that almost always occurs

Significant anxiety and restlessness

One of the earliest warning signs and seems fairly typical

“Hunched up” or “roached up” appearance

This seems to occur fairly frequently

Bloated abdomen that may feel tight (like a drum)

Despite the term “bloat,” many times this symptom never occurs or is not apparent

Pale or off-color gums

Dark red in early stages, white or blue in later stages

Lack of normal gurgling and digestive sounds in the tummy

Many dog owners report this after putting their ear to their dog’s tummy

- Coughing
- Unproductive gagging
- Heavy salivating or drooling
- Foamy mucous around the lips, or vomiting foamy mucous
- Unproductive attempts to defecate
- Whining
- Pacing
- Licking the air
- Seeking a hiding place
- Looking at their side or other evidence of abdominal pain or discomfort
- May refuse to lie down or even sit down
- May stand spread-legged
- May attempt to eat small stones and twigs
- Drinking excessively
- Heavy or rapid panting
- Shallow breathing
- Cold mouth membranes
- Apparent weakness; unable to stand or has a spread-legged stance
Especially in advanced stage
- Accelerated heartbeat
Heart rate increases as bloating progresses
- Weak pulse
- Collapse

How is gastric dilatation and volvulus treated?

When the dog is presented to the hospital his condition is assessed. Blood samples are generally taken and tested to help determine the dog’s status. Usually the animal is in shock, or predisposed to it, so intravenous catheters are placed and fluids are administered. Antibiotics and pain relievers may be given.

The stomach is decompressed either by passing a stomach tube or inserting a large needle into the stomach and releasing the gas. After the animal is stabilized, x-rays are taken to help determine whether or not a volvulus is present.

Some dogs with GDV develop a bleeding disorder called disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC), in which small clots start to develop within the dog's blood vessels. To prevent or treat this condition, heparin is given, if indicated.

The heart rate and rhythm are closely monitored. Some dogs with GDV develop heart arrhythmias, and this is a common cause of death in dogs with GDV. Dogs that already have a heart disease or are prone to heart arrhythmias are generally treated with medication.

Once the dog is stabilized, surgery is performed to accomplish three things:

- Assess the health of the stomach and surrounding organs. If areas of the stomach or spleen have been irreversibly damaged, they are removed. In such a case, the chances for recovery are very poor, and euthanasia may be an alternative.
- Properly reposition the stomach
- Suture the stomach in a way to prevent it from twisting again (a procedure called gastropexy). If gastropexy is not performed, 75-80% of dogs will develop GDV again.

After surgery, the dog is closely monitored for several days for signs of infection, heart abnormalities, DIC, stomach ulceration or perforation, and damage to the pancreas or liver. Antibiotics and additional medications may need to be given.

How is gastric dilatation and volvulus prevented?

Despite adopting all of the recommendations listed below, a dog may still develop GDV. Because of the genetic link involved with this disease, prospective pet owners should question if there is a history of GDV in the lineage of any puppy that is from a breed listed as high risk. In addition, the following recommendations should be followed:

- Large dogs should be fed two or three times daily, rather than once a day.
- Owners of susceptible breeds should be aware of the early signs of bloat.
- Owners of susceptible breeds should develop a good working relationship with a local veterinarian in case emergency care is needed.
- Water should be available at all times, but should be limited immediately after feeding.
- Vigorous exercise, excitement, and stress should be avoided one hour before and two hours after meals.
- Some veterinarians recommend the use of elevated feeders for dogs susceptible to bloat.
- Diet changes should be made gradually over a period of three to five days.
- Susceptible dogs should be fed individually and, if possible in a quiet location.
- Dogs that have survived bloat are at an increased risk for future episodes; therefore prophylaxis in the form of preventive surgery or medical management should be discussed with the veterinarian.

Summary

Bloat is a life threatening condition that most commonly affects large-breed, deep-chested dogs over two years of age. Owners of susceptible breeds should be knowledgeable about the signs of the disease, since early and prompt treatment can greatly improve the outcome. By following the preventive measures recommended, pet owners can further reduce the likelihood of their pet developing this devastating problem.

References and Further Reading

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(Majority of the information was taken from an article written by Holly Nash, DVM, MS Veterinary Services Department, Drs. Foster & Smith, Inc.)

Disaster Preparedness for your Dog

Friday, December 16th, 2005

In light of the terrible hurricane seasons that we have had these past two years I wanted to post some suggestions from animal shelters on how to be prepared in the event of a natural disaster. No matter what area you live in it is always a good idea to be prepared.

Before **ANY** weather emergency **PLAN AHEAD!**

Disaster Preparedness Animal Supplies Checklist

- Food:** Keep at least one week's supply stored in airtight containers. Include a can opener and extra bowl
- Water:** Keep at least two week's supply stored in air tight containers
- Identification:** Animals should always wear a collar with and ID tag. Identify your animal with a permanent microchip. Keep current photos of your animal, include yourself in some photos as proof of ownership
- Paperwork:** A copy of any important papers for your pet should be kept in a waterproof bag.

•**First Aid/Medication:** Prepare or buy a basic animal first aid kit and book. Include at least one week's supply of any long-term medication. Create a collar tag indicating medication needs

•**Cleaning Supplies:** Prepare a small container of dish soap and disinfectant. Include several rolls of paper towels and plastic bags

Information from E.A.R.S. (Emergency Animal Rescue Service)