

Stomach Torsion

The purpose of this article is to bring awareness to first time Great Dane owners of Stomach Torsion, which is the number one killer of Great Danes. We are sure that you probably have many questions about this problem, and this article attempts to answer the most frequently asked questions about the problem.

What exactly is stomach torsion? Stomach Torsion, or “twisted stomach”, is exactly that. The stomach twists and turns, and in fact flips over. Most commonly accompanied by bloat which is an expansion of gas in the stomach, the result is the cutting off of blood circulation to the stomach. If left uncorrected, the stomach literally dies. This is fatal to the dog.

What causes stomach torsion/bloat? The precise cause of stomach torsion and bloat is still unidentified by the AVMA. There are many different factors, and many different schools of thought as to what causes this emergency. Contributing factors may include genetics, stress or anxiety, large feedings, and exercise following feeding.

What are the symptoms of stomach torsion/bloat? The most obvious symptom is distended stomach, obvious pain, the dogs refusal to lie down. Most often these symptoms are late in the progression of the stomach twist. Earlier symptoms can include repeated retching or trying to throw up without anything coming up, excessive salivating, a hiccup-like movement of the head (this may be a difficulty swallowing, and should be differentiated from puppy hiccups). This list of symptoms is based on my own experience with my own dane who twisted and the discussion that I have had with my own veterinarian, not on any veterinary manual.

What do I do if I think my Dane is having this problem? TAKE YOUR DANE TO A VETERIANARIAN IMMEDIATELY. Stomach torsion/bloat have been known to kill in as little as 45 minutes. There is no time to waste. It is very important for Dane owners to know exactly where your closest Animal Emergency Clinic is, and know how to get in touch with your own vet.

How can I prevent this from happening to my Dane? There are many ways to cut down the chances of this happening to your dog, including the following:

4. Feed your dog several small meals a day, instead of one large one.
5. Crate your dog or ensure that the dog’s activity is restricted for at least 60-90 minutes following each meal.
6. Put a couple of simethicone tablets in your dogs food with each meal. This is the active anti-gas ingredient in Maalox anti-gas, DiGel, and Phazyme. Walmart sells a generic anti-gas tablet that is straight simethicone (80 mg), it comes in a turquoise blue bottle with a purple and white label (I think it’s just called Anti-Gas or Gas). This will cut the cost drastically because 1 of these equals 3 Maalox tabs.
7. **The most effective way to prevent this from happening to your Dane is to have its stomach surgically tacked into place.** The procedure is called a circumcostal

gastropexy, and actually takes part of the stomach and attaches it around the last rib. After surgery, the healing process allows the muscle to actually grow in this permanent position. Once this occurs, even if your Dane would happen to bloat, there is not a risk of the stomach twisting and thereby killing the dog.

I highly recommend this preventative measure be taken. I have been through the horror of a stomach torsion with one of my own, and simply would not ever take the risk of it happening to another. There is a huge range in costs for this procedure here in Dallas. I have received quotes of \$300-\$1100 for the preventative surgery. I highly recommend the following vet, who is a strong proponent of this preventative surgery, has done many of them, and currently charges around \$500 for the surgery:

Dr. Kent Cooper, Carrier Animal Hospital, Grand Prairie, Texas (972) 262-1581

There are some very informative websites which we recommend you look over. Many links to these sites are found at the following site: www.doglogic.com

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