



Prophylactic Gastropexy: White Paper

Background: Gastric Dilatation and Volvulus (GDV or 'Bloat') is a life-threatening surgical emergency that can occur in large breed, deep chested dogs and is the result of the stomach filling with air, ingesta and fluid and for uncertain causes will twirl or twist (volvulus) upon itself. If not treated emergently – this condition will result in death of the patient. Current emergency clinic costs to treat GDV after-hours can eclipse \$12,000 and result in an uncertain to grave prognosis if not caught on-time.

The true causes of GDV are incompletely understood – however two of the biggest risk factors are genetic (breed risk) and conformation (deep chest to narrow body ratio). Breeds at high-risk: German Shepherd dogs, Great Danes, Weimaraner, Wolfhounds, Dobermann's, St. Bernards, Akita, Irish Setters, Standard Poodles – this list is NOT exhaustive – our hospital has treated many Labrador Retrievers, American Cocker spaniels and Basset Hounds for GDV.

What is a prophylactic gastropexy?

PG is a surgical procedure in which the stomach is permanently 'attached' to the body wall to prevent future torsion (twisting). 'Food Bloat' or distension can still occur (and will need to be treated if so) in the future however, the torsion – or the component that is life-threatening – is prevented.

What post-operative care is required after a gastropexy?

Prophylactic gastropexies are often performed in association with spay or neuter surgery. In these cases, there is no specific post-operative care beyond that required for a routine spay or neuter. Patients should be kept calm for approximately 14 days post-operatively to allow healing. Running and jumping should be prevented during this time, and pets should avoid swimming or bathing so that the incision can be kept clean and dry. Your dog will likely be sent home with pain medications and it is important to use these medications as directed.

Are there risks specific to a prophylactic gastropexy?

Minimal to none specific. Occasionally a 'pexy' will 'break-down' or 'not-take' and these will need to be revised or performed again. This is exceptionally rare if the pet is appropriately confined in the post-operative period (2 weeks).

Why would we not perform a Prophylactic Gastropexy?

Honestly? If you have a high-risk breed, or if you've had another pet in the past that experienced GDV – there is rarely a compelling reason to decline this crucial prophylactic procedure when the abdomen is open for other reasons ('spay' or abdominal exploratory) – consider this important step as assurances of avoiding unnecessary, preventable – expensive! – life-threatening future trips to an after-hours hospital!