



140 Swanport Road  
Po Box 5181  
Murray Bridge SA 5253  
Ph 08 8531 4000  
Fax 08 8531 4099  
Email [mbvet@lm.net.au](mailto:mbvet@lm.net.au)  
[www.murraybridgevet.com.au](http://www.murraybridgevet.com.au)  
ABN 44 114 962 453



## Gastropexy to prevent gastric dilation volvulus (GDV)

### What is GDV and why does it occur?

GDV is where a dog's stomach fills up with air and then twists resulting in the air becoming trapped inside the stomach. As the stomach continues to fill the blood supply to the stomach becomes cut off causing the stomach to start to die. In some cases the spleen also twists and loses its blood supply. A GDV is a severe life threatening condition. The dog very quickly becomes unwell and starts to go into shock because the enlarged stomach compresses large blood vessels in the abdomen. Toxins from the stomach are released into the dog's blood stream as the stomach dies and these can affect the heart. Without immediate emergency treatment and surgery the dog will die. With prompt treatment and surgery approximately 60-70% of dogs with GDV will survive.

Symptoms of GDV include pain, retching/trying to vomit, a bloated/swollen belly, rapid shallow breathing and eventually collapse and death. Dogs most at risk of GDV are large deep chested dogs. Older dogs are more commonly affected however young dogs can also get a GDV.

There is not one causative factor of GDV. Original theories suggested that it occurred when a dog ate a large meal of dry food and then drank a lot of water. The water caused the dry food to swell. At the same time, the dog was supposed to be engaged in strenuous exercise that included running and jumping. That resulted in the dog's stomach twisting on itself as the heavy organ was jostled about in the abdomen. Although this is the most common explanation given, there is no scientific evidence to support this theory.

The most current theory is that the stomach's contractions lose their regular rhythm and trap air in the stomach maybe due to aerophagia (swallowing air) from the dog panting; this can cause the twisting event. Genetics can also have an effect on the probability of a GDV occurring if a first degree relative had encountered a GDV.

### Prevention of GDV

The most effective way to prevent a GDV is a surgical procedure called a gastropexy. This involves making an incision into the abdomen and permanently attaching the stomach to the side of the abdomen. This anchors it in position and prevents it from twisting. Although the bloating can still occur the life threatening twisting of the stomach is prevented.

A gastropexy is quite a straightforward procedure and can be performed to prevent GDV in most healthy animals. Doing the procedure at the same time as desexing is a good idea especially in female dogs as their abdomens already have to be opened in order to desex them. A gastropexy is strongly recommended for any dog that has a first degree relative (sibling/parent) that has had a GDV. Any large breed, deep chested dog is considered at risk of GDV and will benefit from the procedure.

Various dietary and exercise restrictions may also help prevent GDV:

- Feeding – feed 3 times daily, rather than one large meal
- Feed - individually and in a quiet location
- Diet changes – gradual over 3-5 days
- Avoid Vigorous exercise, excitement, and stress - 1hr before + 2hrs after meals
- Water - should be limited immediately after feeding