

For some helpful tips on keeping your Great Dane in the peak of health, please read the topics below for more information.



Gastric Torsion (Bloat)

This condition is very serious and without a good vet, often fatal especially in giant breeds, Irish setters, blood hounds and Dobermans.

The first signs are of the dog being very restless, they start to pace up and down and then try to vomit. Nothing comes up except plenty of frothy saliva. Dogs have collapsed with pain and dropped down. They seem to lose any concentration on the owner and just seem to want to wander around the edge of their territory. Their abdomen will feel tense and at this stage they may not show a distended rib cage and abdomen. Sometimes it will be extend and if flicked with a finger sound like hollow drum. Antacid preparations can be give and they have worked a few times but should be always followed by a vets visit.

**CALL THE VET IMMEDIATELY WHATEVER THE TIME OF THE DAY OR NIGHT.
YOU HAVE A VERY SHORT TIME TO SAVE YOUR DOG. INSIST ON BEING SEEN.**

Get there as quickly as possible, a bumpy ride may help!! Most vets will be prepared and waiting for you, everybody else will have to wait. Your Dane will be examined. Often a drip will be put in to administer a sedative to help to slow the process down and to prevent further stress and give pain relief. If time allows then x-rays and /or ultra-sounds are performed ensure the correct diagnosis.

The next procedure, which you will not normally see, is the dog being given an anaesthetic and a tube passed into its stomach to remove the gas and stomach contents. If the tube cannot get into the stomach then it is a full torsion i.e. the stomach has twisted and must be operated on to correct this. Speed is vital or it could burst. The stomach acid is also attacking the lining causing permanent damage.

The abdomen is opened and the stomach carefully turned so the gas can escape. It is normal for the stomach now to be stitched to the abdomen as this condition often returns. This procedure stops a full twist again but another bloat can occur with is very painful and still life threatening.

After the operation normally the dog will need at least 24-48 hours in the Vets surgery to recover. They have to drink and then eat a small meal before allowed home.

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Small meals 3-4 a day are necessary and a special diet for a few days with a slow return to normal feeding if at all possible, they may have to have small frequent feeds for a lot longer. The abdominal stitches are usually removed after 10 days at the vets.

Nobody knows what causes these dogs to suffer this condition - if we did, it wouldn't happen. In our case we can always refer to a stress that could have caused it. Yet we know other dogs that had it while asleep. At Great Dane Care, we have had 3 cases of twisted spleen as well as gastric torsion, the spleen torsion being before the gastric condition every time. Other medical conditions such as heart diseases can also predispose dogs to this condition. Stress caused by bitches in season, lactation in newly whelped bitches, aggression for any reason and over exhaustion either exercise or travelling long distances or a food change, can cause bloat.

Prevention

Feed a good quality food and present it as per manufacturer's instructions.

Now it is recommended that we feed on the floor, we would prefer it about 12 inches above the floor but not above shoulder level!!

Never feed when the dog has had heavy exercise, newly returned from a long journey or stressed.

Avoid competition between dogs.

If a bitch is in season avoid the males from knowing if at all possible. If they are not being used as part of a breeding programme neuter both sexes or only keep one sex.

Check your Dane regularly especially after feeding. This is important at special times when the routine is changed such as Christmas, holidays, boarding and bonfire nights.

If you see any signs GET TO THE VET. DON'T WAIT.

Hot Weather Advice

During the hot, humid weather Great Dane owners should be aware that their dogs should only be exercised early in the morning and in the cool of the evening. Their food can be cut back as they will not require the calories to keep them warm and plenty of fresh water, changed frequently, is essential.

Don't travel them in the heat unless absolutely vital. Put a 2 litre pop bottle half full of water in the freezer and then fill with cold water before travelling so they have cold water to drink on a journey. Also a damp towel, loosely folded, can be frozen and this can then be used to cover the dogs in hot weather to help cool them down. A spray bottle is useful to put a fine spray on their back to have the same effects.

Remember that heat affects Great Danes more than the cold. Blacks and blues are especially affected due to their dark colouring. Old, pregnant and overweight dogs need extra care.

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Chocolate Poisoning in Dogs

The number of dogs being poisoned after eating chocolate has seen a dramatic rise. Last year, the Veterinary Poisons Information Service received 1,479 emergency calls about theobromine poisoning in dogs against 1,166 calls in 2007 - a surge of almost 27%.

Karen Sturgeon, specialist in poisons information, said that of the calls last year, two dogs died and three were euthanised. "The actual incidence may be higher as not all veterinary practices are registered with us, not all call about every case they have and not all the case follow up questionnaires we send out (usually to potentially serious cases) are returned" she said. Human chocolate contains theobromine, a naturally occurring compound found in the cocoa bean and it is this compound that is poisonous to dogs.

Symptoms of theobromine poisoning include diarrhoea, restlessness, nausea & vomiting. The central nervous system, heart & kidneys can also be affected. How a dog reacts to the compound depends on it's size, health problems, the amount of chocolate ingested and the type - darker chocolate has higher levels of cocoa solids.

Xylitol Warning

Xylitol is a low-calorie sugar substitute that's helped diabetics and weight loss seekers get their sugar fix, in spite of dietary restrictions. And, just like chocolate and grapes, it's natural, further disproving the claim that "natural is always safe." That's because Xylitol, a sugar compound sourced from the Birch tree, has been recently discovered to be 100% lethal to dogs. In many cases, the quantity of Xylitol-containing food was small – as in a box of sugar-free Tic-Tacs, a sugar free pudding snack or one sugar-free cupcake. With Xylitol poisoning the most obvious sign is seizure - as your dog's blood sugar levels plummet. Should the dog survive this phase, liver toxicity and clotting problems often result. As if that wasn't enough to strike fear into the heart of any dog lover, the additional danger in Xylitol is three-fold.

Only small quantities are needed to do serious damage. Xylitol is found in an increasing number of consumer products and foodstuffs (kid's vitamins, mints, gums, toothpaste, sugar-free baked goods, etc.). Most dog owners don't yet know about it. The latter hazard seems most pressing. After all, if you have no idea that certain mints contain Xylitol, you won't be so careful about where you leave them. If you don't know that a sugar-free cupcake contains it, you might not think twice about throwing a stale one your dogs' way –or leaving the box on the counter. Not until your dog starts seizing, as the blood sugar drops, will you begin to wonder what could have led to the physiological free-fall.

This is really scary stuff. More so because many veterinarians are still in the dark about Xylitol, its effects and its prevalence. A seizing dog? Could be from anything. Unless you're asked about specific food poisons, you might not think to check if your gum is still in your pocket. You might have forgotten about the pastry, stressed out as you now are.

Which begs the question: Should these products be labelled "unsafe for canine consumption"? Though perhaps that to be the case, it's not happening anytime soon. Spread the word among your dog-loving friends. Read your labels and, if you choose to use these products, be very careful where you leave them.