

## Bloat

I have reprinted Joan's story (with her permission) about her dog's bloat episode in hopes that it will make you aware of some of the signs. This is a deadly problem and once it starts, you only have 2 hours to get your pet to the vet. My Leo got bloat after I was gone for a week — the cause was simply that he was so excited and overwhelmed with "mom" coming home that his whole system over-reacted. At 11 pm on a Christmas Eve, he bloated. But we recognized his pacing and continual whinning and got him to the emergency vet in time.

Surviving Bloat, by Joan Hoover

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On Saturday night while watching a movie in bed, our beloved Wizard started showing signs of restlessness. He couldn't get settled on his dog bed, moved to another dog bed, then jumped up on our bed with us and still just couldn't find a comfortable position to sleep. I went over to touch his tummy and it was hard. We knew we had less than an hour to get Wiz to the emergency room. We threw on our clothes and were in the car within 2 minutes. Jim drove as fast as possible while I tried to comfort Wizard through my tears. We called ahead to the animal emergency care facility to let them know we were on our way with a bloat (stomach torsion) emergency.

When we arrived at the emergency room, Wizard was going into shock. After a quick X-ray, they immediately aspirated his (two) stomachs, relieving the pressure and emptying the stomach contents. After a bunch of lab work and an EKG, Wiz was OK'd for surgery. A more qualified surgeon was called in to do the operation to untwist his stomach. We were lucky to have had such a talented surgeon working on Wizard. He was fast, efficient and competent and complimentary of what great physical condition Wiz was in for an 8 year old GSD. Wizard's heart is strong in more ways than the obvious.

Despite religiously following all the rules to minimize bloat it happened to us: no exercise at least 90 minutes before and after eating; we feed twice a day (now we're going to three times/day) on elevated stands; and we monitor water intake.

We count ourselves among the fortunate that Wizard presented his symptoms while we were home AND awake and that we were able to recognize his plight and get him to the emergency room in time. He suffered no stomach or spleen necrosis. So, other than a 20-inch scar on his belly as a reminder, we're hopeful that Wiz will make a full recovery. He's got a few more good years in him!

If we had any advice to share with our dog friends, it would be:

- \* Know exactly where your closest emergency animal care facility is (drive by it!)
- \* Put their number on your cell phone (I hadn't)

\* Know the symptoms of early bloat (if you're dog looks like he's swallowed a balloon, it could be too late)

\* Feed smaller, more frequent meals . . . the surgeon said twice/day was the minimum for bloat-prone breeds

\* If you just think it could be bloat, get to the hospital ASAP. You have minutes, not hours to get emergency attention or your dog will die.

MaryLouise lost her wonderful Kody to bloat while boarding. If Wizard had bloated on Friday night instead of Saturday, we would have come home to a dead dog. We are so lucky!

Joan & Jim