



DCAH Newsletter

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Is your Dog at Risk for Bloat?

Gastric dilatation volvulus syndrome, more commonly known as bloat, is a serious condition in dogs. Bloat is when the stomach twists on itself and cuts off its blood supply along with that to other organs. At the same time, air and gas trapped in the stomach accumulate causing a distended abdomen. Shock and organ failure due to the lack of blood complicates the condition and may lead to death. Obvious symptoms include a distended abdomen, non-productive vomiting, salivating, and an inability to get up.

There has been an epidemic of bloat during the past decade although no one really knows why. Most at risk for bloat are older, deep-chested, large breed dogs. (However, smaller dogs can also get bloat.) There is also a genetic predisposition to bloat. Nervous or fearful dogs are more prone to bloat than calm dogs, indicating that stress could be a factor.

If you suspect that your dog may be experiencing bloat, it

is an **immediate emergency**. A dog can die from it in a matter of **hours**. Treatment for bloat includes immediately releasing the gas by inserting a stomach tube orally or inserting a needle into the stomach to release the gas. Surgery is usually required to untwist the stomach. Since there is an 80 % chance of the bloat happening again, the surgery usually includes suturing the stomach to the abdominal wall to prevent a recurrence.

There is no definitive method for preventing bloat although there are a number of suggestions that *may* decrease the probability. They include: more frequent but smaller meals, raising the food dish on a platform, decreasing stress, and methods to keep your dog from eating too fast.

The most important thing to remember is that if you suspect your dog has bloat, it is an emergency and must be treated immediately. 🐾

Meet the Staff

One of the most important members of our staff is one that you will probably never meet. She is Melinda Whitman, our night nurse.

She works from 9 p.m. until 5 a.m. looking after our boarders and our surgical and hospitalized patients. Our hospital is one of the few non-emergency hospitals in the area that has a night nurse

Melinda's job is particularly challenging because she works alone. She has to pull blood, re-bandage catheters, give injections, monitor a patient's vital statistics, and many other things. Sometimes she has to treat patients that do not feel well and are not always "cooperative". She is authorized to contact the doctors immediately any time a patient is having serious difficulties.

However, Melinda says she enjoys caring for the animals and likes working alone. Each night is different and she never knows what type of cases she will find when she comes in. She likes playing classical music for herself and the patients each night.

Melinda was born in Pennsylvania, spent most of her life in Chesapeake, VA, and then settled in Northern Virginia. She came to this area while in the Army in 1984. She retired from the Army as a Master Sergeant after spending 21½ years on active duty. She worked as a veterinary assistant for three years at several animal hospitals in the Alexandria area prior to coming here about five years ago.

She has 7 cats, all of them strays that she rescued. Other interests include playing trumpet and percussion and singing in the choir at St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

It should be comforting to know that if your pet has to spend the night with us, it will not be alone. Melinda will be taking good care of it. 🐾



Melinda and our hospital cat, Molly, look after your pets at night.

Have a Heart Fund

Julie, pictured below, is one of the beneficiaries of our fund this quarter. She came to us when she was about a week old. Something had been wrapped around one of her legs, cutting off the blood flow. The leg had to be amputated. Our doctors donated their time for the surgery and your funds paid for her medications and care. She is now a very active three month old puppy and doesn't even realize she is supposed to have four legs. Even with just three legs, she keeps her new owner busy trying to keep up with her.

Hazel, pictured at right, was another benefactor. She was in our isolation unit for over a month with an upper respiratory infection. As a result her socialization skills were not very good. However, we slowly brought her around and she found a happy home with Kevin Fultz and his family.

Contributors for this period follow:

Mary Whitaker
Sherry Foster (In memory of Reba)
Karen Smith (In memory of Tara)
Greg Menke (who adopted one of our kittens "Spida")
Susan and Alfred Hughes
Davis Gaddy (In memory of Teresa Carlson)
Mary Heard
Teresa Croce (In memory of Lily and Murphy)
Toniann McFadden (In memory of Fluffy)
Cynthia Schell
Harry and Nancy Fiske
Linda Boland
Gwen Smith
Pamela and Michael Fultz (who adopted Hazel)
Dave Cummings 🐾



Hazel is very content in her adopted home with her new buddy, Kevin Fultz.



Julie is a happy, active puppy who doesn't realize she is missing a leg.

Farwell to Dr. Julie McBride

Approximately a year ago, we introduced you to Dr Julie McBride who had recently joined our staff. Sadly, we now have to bid her farewell. Her Air Force husband has been transferred to Germany and she will be leaving this spring. We will miss her and wish her and her family well. 🐾

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