

## Swiss Run Greater Swiss Mountain Dogs

### Gastric Dilation (Bloat)

Bloat is a syndrome in dogs where the stomach dilates and can twist around its central axis. This can occur at anytime, any age, and most often is seen in large, deep chested breeds. This can be a life threatening problem. If you notice your dog looking a little bloated and uncomfortable get them to your veterinarian right away.

There are a few different types of bloat. First is gastric dilation without torsion. This is when there is an abnormally distended stomach usually from gas, food, and/or liquid. Second is gastric dilation with a torsion. As the stomach expands with fluids, solids or air, it often then twists between the duodenum and the esophagus. When this happens, the stomach is clamped off at these two points causing even more pressure to build. This causes the dog to have difficulty burping, vomiting or passing gas for relief. As the pressure in the stomach grows, the stomach enlarges and begins to compress veins in the abdomen, restricting blood flow back to the heart, causing a blood pressure drop and shock. In the meantime the stomach tissue becomes necrotic, due to the disrupted blood flow and the dying tissue may release toxins. In the most severe torsion cases, very often both the stomach and the spleen will twist. It is possible for the stomach to twist clockwise or counterclockwise, rotating from 90 degrees to 360 degrees. The most common presentation is clockwise. There are a few signs to look for if you think your dog might be bloating. They may be retching without production of vomit, have an increasingly distended abdomen, be weak, collapsing, or depressed.

Your veterinarian can diagnose bloat with radiographs. On the radiograph you will see a "double bubble" appearance if there is a torsion. Once diagnosed, the first step of treatment is to get the dog stabilized with an IV and fluids. Once the dog is stable enough, it must go to surgery to fix the torsion; one procedure is called a gastropexy. This is the most common procedure. Once the stomach is back in its regular position, a section of the stomach wall is looped through the rib cage and secured back to the stomach. This will help prevent a torsion in the future. Keep in mind even with this procedure your dog could still bloat, but hopefully not twist. This procedure is important to do because re-occurrence rates are as high as 80% without a gastropexy versus 3-5 % with a gastropexy procedure. There are some complications that can occur while in surgery. If the bloat was not diagnosed soon enough the torsion could cause some of the intestines to die and they would have to be removed during surgery.

Bloat is one of the leading causes of premature death in Greater Swiss Mountain Dogs. Any responsible Swissy owner should understand the risks of bloat in this breed, be able to recognize the symptoms and have a plan of action in place, including a 24-hour emergency vet close by.

As for what really causes bloat, there is no easy answer. Some factors that may play a role are food-related factors (how much, how often, what kind), stress or anxiety levels, exercise too soon before or after mealtime, gulping of food/water, age and heredity. Many of these factors are beyond our control, so we try to control what we can by feeding our dogs high quality foods (meat-based, with no processed grains), adding probiotics or enzymes to assist digestion, avoiding soy products and brewer's yeast. We also want to feed smaller meals at least twice a day, monitor the amount of water ingested before and after each meal, and limit our dog's activity 30 minutes before and 60 minutes after meals. Another recommendation would be to have a gastropexy surgery performed when your dog is spayed or neutered.