



## The BIG tummy trouble

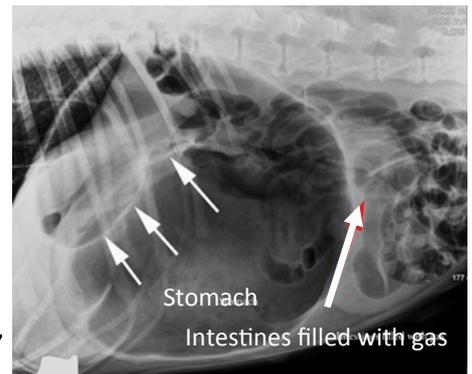
There are a few diseases and disorders which are classified as emergencies, these are times when half an hour can be the difference between life and death. One such emergency is what veterinarians call a GDV (short for gastric dilation-volvulus). The stomach fills with gas/air and then twists meaning the gas is unable to escape, animals effected can quickly go in to shock which leads to organ failure and death.

Does my dog have GDV?

- Swollen abdomen
- Vomiting which progresses to non-productive retching
- Excessive salivation
- Lethargy
- Difficulty breathing

There are a few risk factors which make GDV more likely

- Large breed dogs with a deep chest including Great Danes, Huntaway's, Weimaraners and Boxers
- A parent or sibling with GDV
- A large meal
- Having the food bowl elevated or lowered
- Anxious dogs



If your dog fits into the risk category and displays any troubling signs then please make an urgent call to your veterinarian. If the vet suspects a GDV they will advise you to bring your dog straight down and will run a number of tests. Usually an x-ray will give the veterinarian a quick diagnosis if GDV is the problem.

Treatment will require surgery, this can only be carried out if the dog is stable enough. While preparing for surgery the vet will establish intravenous fluid therapy, may give oxygen, give pain relief and will try to decompress the stomach either via a stomach tube or by inserting a needle across the abdominal wall. Surgery involves untwisting the stomach and emptying out any remaining gas or fluid. The stomach will then be attached to the body wall to ensure the problem doesn't happen again. Sometimes if the stomach has become too compromised, part of it may need to be cut out.

## Cat fights & Cat bites

It is not uncommon for cats to scarp, particularly males who are entire and guarding their territory. Cats mouths are filled with many bacteria, when introduced into the skin through a cat bite these can have devastating consequences. Cat bite abscesses are one of the more common reasons we see your furry friends. What happens is bacteria get introduced into the tissue under the skin and then the skin wound heals over. As a result the nasty bacteria are trapped inside, the warm moist environment is perfect for growth and proliferation which happens very quickly. After 2-3 days your cat may have a soft painful swelling, this is a pus filled area which requires draining to let the bacteria out. If left the bacteria can move from the soft tissue into the blood stream resulting in a sepsis. By this stage cats often become dull and lethargic, they stop drinking and eating leading to dehydration.



Signs that your cat has been fighting include scabs either around the head/neck or around the tail base (often this is the case if poor fluffy was trying to run away), saliva on the cats coat which can form little matts and painful areas on your cat which may have some swelling associated.

Cat bite abscesses are very painful so even if the abscess has burst and is draining by itself it is best to get it checked out. Your vet can provide some anti-inflammatory pain relief as required. If your cat is showing signs of sepsis the vet will often also give some antibiotics to help with the recovery and clear any bacteria from their system.

## Case of the Month – Are those guts hanging out?!

Jill is a three year old female greyhound. She had sustained a large penetrating wound to her abdomen and some of her abdominal contents were protruding from the wound when she presented to the clinic. Jill needed emergency surgery to ensure that all her abdominal organs were intact and to repair the wound. Jill was examined to ensure she had sustained no other life threatening injuries that could compromise her during the anaesthetic. She was given a good dose of pain relief and put under general anaesthetic. She was started on intravenous fluids and intravenous antibiotics to help fight infection. The abdominal contents protruding from the wound were assessed, thankfully it was not the intestines, but some abdominal fat known as the omentum. The dead parts of the omentum were cut out and the viable portions maintained and put back into the abdomen. All the abdominal organs were assessed to ensure that they had not been damaged. Jill was particularly lucky as her stomach had been scraped by the offending object, but thankfully the object had not made it through the stomach wall which would have been a lot more serious. The abdomen was given a good flush out with warm saline to minimise the risk of Jill developing an abdominal infection known as peritonitis. Jill was woken up from anaesthetic and she recovered in the hospital overnight. She was sent home with some pain relief and an ongoing course of antibiotics to minimise the risk of developing peritonitis. Jill went home feeling much better the next day.

If any of your pets sustain an injury that causes a wound it is best to get an appointment booked with the vet so the wound can be examined. It may need stitching or for some wounds bandaging it might be the best option. If it is a deeper wound it may need surgery like Jill. Any significant trauma to the abdomen whether it causes a visible wound or not should be checked out as internal bleeding may occur or organ damage which should be addressed sooner rather than later.

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## The Possible Crazy Cat Lady In All Of Us

It has long been joked about that having many cats makes you a crazy cat lady, however there may be a truthful origin to this familiar phrase. A zoonosis is an infectious disease which can transfer from animals to people. Some well known zoonoses include tuberculosis, salmonella and rabies. One zoonosis which doesn't get quite as much attention is toxoplasmosis which is spread by cats.

Toxoplasmosis is a disease caused by the protozoan *Toxoplasma gondii* which can infect all mammals. Once a human or animal has been infected by the bug they usually become immune and so the greatest risk is when infected for the first time or if you become immune suppressed. Cats get infected when hunting, eating raw foods or when grooming if there is *Toxoplasma* eggs on their fur. After infection the bug multiplies in the intestine lining of the cat before being passed in the faeces in egg form. These eggs require 2-3 days to develop, they are then infectious to all animals including humans. Due to the immunity which develops as mentioned above, shedding of high numbers of eggs for 7-14 days usually only occurs after the first infection. Interestingly in other animals the bug doesn't stay in the intestine and multiply but can spread through the body where they invade different kind of cells in different tissues. Here they multiply and form a cyst which can remain for life, most commonly these are found in the brain and muscle (this process can also occur in cats). The tissue cysts are infectious; so carnivores can be infected by eating tissue cysts or eggs while herbivores can only be infected by eating eggs on their feed after being contaminated by cat faeces.

*Toxoplasma* is most often brought up in discussion due to the risks associated with pregnant women. If a woman is infected for the first time while pregnant when the bug spreads through the body it may invade the foetus. Depending on the stage of pregnancy this may result in abortion or birth of offspring which are infected that can die soon after birth, have birth defects or may appear completely normal.

A human which is infected for the first time may show no sign of illness but others may have flu like symptoms with fever and swollen lymph nodes. Crazy cat lady syndrome is a media coined term due to the possible link of *Toxoplasma* infection with some mental and behavioural disorders. There are some scientific findings which suggest schizophrenia may be one such disorder. The most recent study which accounted for many other variables however suggests cat ownership doesn't seem to truly increase one's risk of psychosis.

All this being said it is still pertinent to try and avoid infection, especially if pregnant; Frequent changing of your cat's litter box at least once a day can ensure disposal of the eggs before they are infectious. Wash your hands thoroughly after changing your cat's litter box. Wear gloves when gardening in places cats may have defecated. Don't feed your cat raw meat (freezing doesn't reliably kill *Toxoplasma*). Be careful when cooking raw meat, especially lamb and pork making sure you wash your hands after handling meat and don't eat meat before it has finished cooking properly.

