

Mega esophagus

To live or not to live!!

VOMITING VERSUS REGURGITATION

Most people do not realize that there is a difference between these two actions.

Vomiting is an active process. There is gagging, heaving, and retching as the body actively expels stomach contents.

Regurgitation is passive. For whatever reason, food is swallowed from the mouth but never really goes anywhere beyond that point. Food sits in the esophagus until it simply falls back out the mouth at some point. In the dog, mega esophagus is the most common cause of regurgitation.

WHAT IS MEGAESOPHAGUS



*Normal canine chest radiograph
(black “tube” on top left is the trachea,
not the esophagus. The esophagus is
much thinner and cannot be seen)*

*The outline of a mega
esophagus*



The esophagus is the tube connecting the throat to the stomach. When food is perceived in the esophagus, a neurologic reflex causing sequential muscle contraction and relaxation leads to rapid transport of the food into the stomach, like an elevator going down. Other reflexes prevent breathing during this swallowing process to protect the lungs from aspiration.

When these reflexes are interrupted such as by disease in the esophageal tissue or nerve disease, the esophagus loses its ability to transport food. Instead the esophagus loses all tone and dilates. Also, the reflex protecting the lung is disrupted and aspiration pneumonia commonly follows.

A life long commitment

Raising these puppies is particularly difficult from 4 weeks to 4 months of age. You have to make the decision to euthanize at the time the mega esophagus has been diagnosed.

Puppies being raised by hand feeding become far more attached and human orientated than normal puppies. They develop an unbelievable bond to the human. Once the decision has been made there are a few rules to follow for its life time:

Puppyhood

Feeding Routine

From 4 weeks to 4 months

Before you start feeding -
weigh the daily portion.

Only feed Beef Mince,
split the daily portion into the
number of meals you are
going to feed (at least 5 – 7
meals per day)

Sit when you feed the puppy. Hold the puppy in your left hand supported on your upper left leg.

Take a small amount of meat into your right hand (if you are right handed) place it in the palm of your hand. Close your hand and form the meat into a sausage, let the sausage stick out of the palm of your hand and hold it vertically above the puppy's head.

Depending on the severity of the mega esophagus you have to only let it have one or two bites, then place the puppy over your left shoulder, pat it on the back to ease the food going down (like making a baby burb) wait a few seconds and continue.

You continue with this method until about 10 weeks of age.

From about 10 weeks to 16 weeks of age you have the puppy standing on the floor, you sitting, with its front feet on your upper leg and again the same procedure, hold your hand with the meat vertically above its head. You now have to feed about 8 - 10 x per day, as the intake becomes more and the puppy cannot eat large amounts at one time.

Repeat the procedure of picking your puppy up putting it over your shoulder and pat the back.

Depending on the weight of your puppy you will be able to pick it up until the age of 4 months. Thereafter it is becoming problematic.

It is very important for the strengthening of the mega esophagus that the puppy does not regurgitate at any time.

From about 4 months of age you can start soaking pellets into a porridge mixed with meat, I still hand feed until about 5 months, I still weigh the daily portion and split it into at least 4 meals.

It becomes easier from 5 months onwards. Once you let the puppy eat out of a bowl, the bowl has to be raised in accordance with the height of the puppy.

For the rest of its life, the dog has to eat from a raised position. Approx. 40 cm off the ground.

Adulthood

Never

- Leave toys lying around
- Leave bones lying around
- Avoid chewing on blankets
- Avoid chewing on any article which could lodge in the mega esophagus

Never.....

- feed together with another dog
- feed on the floor
- feed large quantities
- feed once per day
- feed dry large pellets
- feed cow hooves
- feed bones

Breeding

This is a decision only the Breeder
can make.

Once you decided to breed, there are certain implications:

- the bitch cannot swallow the afterbirth
- the bitch cannot be fed in the whelping box
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