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Animal Crackers

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Bloat

Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus, commonly called “Bloat” is a leading cause of death in large and giant breed dogs. It is characterized by rapid accumulation of air in the stomach, malposition of the stomach, and shock.

A recently published study reports on non-dietary risk factors for GDV. It showed that increasing age, having a first-degree relative with a history of GDV, having a faster speed of eating and having a raised feeding bowl were significantly associated with an increased risk of GDV. Eleven breeds were studied (akita, bloodhound, collie, great Dane, Irish setter, Irish wolfhound, Newfoundland, Rottweiler, Saint Bernard, standard poodle and Weimaraner).

On the basis of this study, the strongest recommendation to prevent GDV should be to not breed a dog with a first-degree relative that has had GDV. A genetic predisposition to GDV may operate through a particular body shape, personality or temperament that predisposes to GDV. In the study, there seemed to be no advantage to restricting water intake or exercise before or after eating. A significant risk factor for either large or giant breeds was raising the feed bowl.

Gastropexy (surgical fixation of the stomach) has been shown to prevent a recurrence of GDV following an acute episode. Although there is no scientific evidence that gastropexy will prevent a first occurrence of GDV, it might be considered as a prophylactic.

Numerous recommendations for preventing GDV in dogs can be found in veterinary textbooks, lay publications and on the Internet. This new study shows that more than half of the cases of GDV were attributed to having a raised feed bowl. The study was published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 217:1492-1499 (November 2000).

Rabies in Pennsylvania

Rabies is an important public health problem. Mandatory vaccination of dogs has been effective. In Pennsylvania in 1994, 792 dogs were positive for rabies, but no dogs were reported positive in 1999 or the first half of 2000. However, in 1999, domestic animals positive for rabies included 22 cats, three cattle, two horses and one goat. In previous years, sheep, pigs, and domestic rabbits have been reported positive. Feral or free-roaming cats are a problem.

In Pennsylvania and the United States, rabies now is primarily a disease of mammalian wildlife. In 1999 in Pennsylvania, positive cases included 193 raccoons, 91 skunks, 22 foxes, 17 bats, four groundhogs and one beaver. In earlier years, it has been reported in squirrels but not in wild rabbits, mice or chipmunks. One deer was reported positive in early 2000.

Bats routinely enter human dwellings and are the primary reason that indoor cats should be vaccinated against rabies. A total of 24 human deaths (one in Pennsylvania) have been documented in the United States since 1980 and 21 of these deaths were associated with bat rabies.

Vaccination of dogs and cats is a must. Wildlife rabies vaccination programs have some success but are costly and difficult. It is likely that rabies will be present in wildlife for many years. Vaccination of the dog and cat population controls dog and cat rabies and provides an effective barrier for humans.

Spinone Italiano

The Spinone Italiano is now eligible to compete for championship points at American Kennel Club shows. It will be shown in the sporting group and may participate in all other AKC-sanctioned events including obedience, agility, tracking and hunting tests.

The Spinone is an ancient Italian breed descended from the griffon. It can be traced back to 500 B.C. It was bred for versatility and could perform any task required during the hunt, including tracking, pointing, retrieving and even bringing down quarry, whether on land (in mountains and forests) and in fast-running streams or marsh water. Following World War II, the breed went into a steep decline but it has come back and now has an active breed club and a web site (www.spinone.com) where information about the breed is available.

The Spinone is named for the pino — a thickly growing, seemingly impenetrable thorn bush — and has tough, thick, close-fitting skin and rough, dense, dry hair only 1½ to 2½ inches long. Its height at the withers is 23 to 27 inches for males and 22 to 25 inches for females with weight ranging from 60 to 80 pounds. An unique characteristic is the topline which is two-segmented, sloping downward from the withers to the 11th thoracic vertebra, then rising gradually into the well-arched loin. Colors include solid white, white and orange,

and chestnut brown. Disqualifications are any black in the coat and tri-color. Consult the breed standard for more details.

The Spinone is a sociable breed and can be a good family member as well as a methodical worker in the field. It may not be suitable for all households — the scruffy beard can drip water around the house and the bristly coat is shed every year. It has been described as sociable, docile, patient and easy to please, barking only for good reason. Look for this “new” breed at dog shows.

BOOK REVIEW

Cats for Dummies 2nd Edition by Gina Spadafori and Paul D. Pion, D.V.M., IDG Books Worldwide, 909 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022, \$19.95

The cat is now the top pet in the United States numbering over 60 million. This book has the answer to most questions: where to find a cat, how to bring a cat or kitten into your life, keep it happy and healthy, and care for the older cat. Behavior problems, traveling with your cat and moving to a new home are covered. Cat myths are debunked, common household dangers are described and there’s much more useful information.

A few notes selected at random:

“Every cat needs his own carrier. A sturdy carrier makes going to the veterinarian, traveling or moving safer and easier for your pet and offers you some options in times of disasters.”

“A cat can’t thrive on a diet of dog food, and fat is a major reason. Most dog food also lacks enough taurine to meet the needs of your cat.”

“Cats love warm, dark hiding places, and a dryer full of freshly dried clothes is a favorite spot of many. Some cats have been killed after their owners have accidentally closed and turned on a dryer with a sleeping cat inside.”

“Common sense dictates that no animal be left unattended with a small child.”

“Cats are smarter than dogs. You can’t get eight cats to pull a sled through the snow.”

“Don’t bother with worming medications sold at pet-supply stores: they may not treat the kind of parasites your cat has. Better you should have your veterinarian accurately diagnose and treat your cat than subject you pet to medication that doesn’t fit the problem.”