

## The Great Dane Health Concerns

**Responsible owners should know what health risks are prone for their dog.**

Every dog owner's goal is to try and keep his dog as happy and healthy as possible. Fortunately, the Great Dane is a very healthy breed of dog. On the whole, they have very few health problems of which an owner needs to be aware. Provided that you have purchased your dog from a reputable breeder who tests for problems and breeds only healthy dogs, everything should be fine. The breeder should provide a health certificate from his own veterinarian indicating that his stock has been thoroughly checked and are in optimum health. You should also receive a record of your chosen dog's worming shots. You can bring this record along with you to your own vet's office. In all cases, it's recommended that you have your own veterinarian examine the dog very soon after you have purchased him and have him home.

### Bloat (Gastric Torsion)

Bloat is a condition that affects large and deep-chested breeds. It can occur in smaller dogs, but larger breeds are more susceptible. Great Dane owners must be aware of this very serious condition that involves the release of gas from food in the dog's stomach, which eventually causes the stomach to twist and turn, cutting off the blood supply and preventing gas and stomach contents from leaving. What makes the condition so serious is that you never know when bloat is going to occur. When it does, there is very little time to seek veterinary care. If the dog isn't rushed into surgery immediately, he likely will die.

### Foreign Objects and Poisonous Substances

Great Dane puppies can be very curious. Their curiosity can sometimes get them into serious trouble. It's not uncommon for them to pick up rocks or other foreign substances off the ground. In doing so, they may swallow something that is extremely harmful, if not deadly. It's important to keep any small objects, poisonous liquids, detergents or cleaning fluids out of both the young and adult dog's reach. Keep in mind that the Great Dane is larger than most other breeds, and is therefore fully capable of reaching places that ordinary-sized dogs could not.

If you suspect that your Great Dane has swallowed something foreign, induce vomiting at once. Placing peroxide or washing soda in the dog's mouth will force the dog to vomit, and hopefully discharge any foreign substance or liquid he has swallowed. Immediately contact your veterinarian for further assistance.

### Teenage Spots

This is a condition that causes harmless black or brown spots to appear around the mouth and below the dog's chin. There is no need to panic if your Great Dane develops such symptoms. Although the cause of these spots is unknown, they will disappear in time.

### Heart Problems

Great Danes may be susceptible to a serious heart muscle condition known as dilated cardiomyopathy, which eventually causes heart failure. This form of heart muscle defect is common in large breeds such as the Great Dane, Doberman Pinscher and German Shepherd, as well as some of the spaniel breeds. The affected heart is unable to pump properly due to its stretched condition. The cause is quite unknown, though a genetic predisposition is suggested as is a nutritional amino-acid imbalance (which has been observed in the Boxer and Doberman Pinscher). Early signs in the Great Dane include coughing, general weakness and depression, and decreased interest in food and exercise, plus the possibility of an increased heart rate. Sudden deaths have been recorded in many cases of the defect in the Great Dane.

### Wobbler Syndrome

Wobbler syndrome is a serious disease that is caused by the compression of the spinal cord, which in turn causes the neck bone to be disfigured. Dogs that are affected with the condition usually cannot support the weight of their rear end, and have a drunken-like movement. It usually develops in dogs that are three to five months of age. Although surgery is available to treat the condition, most attempts are not successful. The disease is inherited, and any dog that has the condition should be immediately removed from any breeding program.

### Hip Dysplasia

Hip dysplasia is a well-known condition that affects many hunting, herding and working breeds. It affects either one or both hip joints, and is a result of looseness, or improper fit, of the ball and socket. The condition can be inherited or caused by a quick weight gain in younger dogs. Although surgery is available to correct the condition, most procedures are very expensive and may not always be successful. Puppies can be tested, but not until 24 months of age can a dog be diagnosed with or cleared as free of the condition. Dogs that test positive through x-rays should not be used in one's

breeding program.

#### Entropion/Ectropion

Although not very common, entropion does occur in Great Danes. The ailment involves the inward turning of the eyelid, which results in the eyelashes' scratching the surface of the eyeball. It can be a very painful condition that may eventually lead to corneal ulceration. Fortunately, treatment is available through a veterinarian.

In the condition known as ectropion, the lower eyelid turns outwards. The end result is usually severe eye irritation (redness, soreness, etc.) and possible infection and discharge. This inherited condition can also be treated by ointments and antibiotics administered by your veterinarian.

#### Characteristics of the Great Dane

##### Selecting a Great Dane

Excerpt from Comprehensive Owner's Guide: Great Dane