

YOUR DOG ATE WHAT?

If you own a bull terrier, you know that they will eat anything their little heart's desire. Coins, buttons, rocks, socks, earrings, blankets, stuffed toys, and wastebasket contents (especially in the bathroom) are all treats for your bull terrier. Dental floss, dental plaquers, (mint flavor, yummy) underwear, diapers, you name it, the list is endless. So how does one know when to be concerned? After more than thirty-five years of living with bull terriers, I am still learning all their little quirks. I am going to help you sort things out methodically.

It is a no brainer if you saw your dog eat something that you know does not belong in a stomach, **call your veterinarian** and tell them what it was. If this occurs during the night and your own vet's office is closed, call a 24-hour veterinarian service, the sooner, the better. If it is an item that can be safely vomited back up, the veterinarian can help that happen. A vet may also be able to go down into the stomach to retrieve the item with the aid of a scope.

What if you are not sure your dog ate something that does not belong in a stomach or intestine? One good guess might be that you see your dog is vomiting. How do you tell if it is an upset stomach, a disease process, or a foreign body is causing the vomiting? Dogs do vomit for other reasons, not only because they have consumed a foreign body item.

If your dog is throwing up, watch them, as sometimes dogs will fall over to their sides. Make sure their airway is clear and that whatever they are trying to vomit up is not blocking their airway. Make sure that your dog does not go filling his belly with leaves, grasses, or debris (ripping up crate blankets and faux sheepskin pads is often done) in an effort to try to make themselves vomit. It will only add to the problem. If your dog is vomiting continually, I consider **this an emergency. Call your veterinarian.**

When one of my bullies has an upset stomach, I give him Pepcid AC 20 mg, place him in a crate without any blankets or water and let him rest. **(Please call your veterinarian before you give your dog any Pepcid and make sure it is OK by them.)** After about 2 hours of rest, I take him out on a leash to walk them around. If he is still trying to eat grass, I return him to his crate after the walk. Then, I wait another few hours, do the same thing again, and offer them only a few laps of water. After eight to twelve hours, if it was only an upset stomach, they will be back to their old selves.

So, you did the above, and the next morning your dog vomits up his meal he ate only hours before. I would be concerned. I would put Fido back in to the crate with a small bowl of water. If Fido is gulping down the water, take the water out. I would then offer a few laps every hour. **Call the vet and let them know what is going on.** At this point, speaking from my experience, I would be thinking gastritis, pancreatitis, or foreign body obstruction. A trip to the vet is in order.

Now we are at 24 hours of no food, not feeling well and vomiting occasionally. We have made a trip to the vet, did blood work, and test results are back, all within normal limits. X-rays showed nothing significant. Now it is narrowed down to gastritis and your vet might say, "Take your dog home and watch him."

What if, heading into the next 24 hours, your dog is still not eating? From experience, if my dog is refusing to eat or has not kept food down for over 36 to 48 hours, he will be going to a 24-hour veterinary service to stay. When I meet the veterinarian, my dog is on the exam table, smiling and wagging his tail, not looking sick at all. I say "Just so that we are on the same page, Doc, Fido here has not eaten or pooped in over 48 hours. (Your dog can have diarrhea and still have a partial obstruction, so be sure to mention if there have been any bowel activity.) This is not normal for Fido. I will bring him back home when a can of dog food goes in the front end and comes out the back end (I mean the contents of that can, Doc) So Doc, what you need to do is make that happen, Fido is in your hands. I want my dog to have 24 hour care." Fido might need IV fluids to get over this "upset" stomach or to help aid in a bowel movement and keep those kidneys well hydrated and flushed. In addition, if Fido does have a foreign body obstruction, keeping well hydrated with the aid of IV fluids will cause him to be less of a surgical risk.

A word on X-rays: X-rays will not pick up all types of blockages or foreign bodies. They may show dilated loops of air, which could be pieces of chewed up blankets or something else soft, even if there are bits of chewed up plastic in it. The barium swallow test will not confirm a soft blockage, as the barium will seep through the material. The test results would only show a slight slowing down of the digestive system. Abdominal ultrasound will show plastic pieces in your dog's gut. This is usually the last test used if all others fail to show a foreign body obstruction.

Why is this all so serious? If a dog's intestine has an abnormal amount of pressure against it, it slows down or stops the blood flow to that piece or section of intestine. That section of intestine can become necrotic, starts to die off. Sharp edges or objects can also tear or puncture the stomach or intestine. Once there is a hole in the digestive system, contents of the gut spill into the abdominal cavity. You have the start of peritonitis. Not good. With sepsis, it is now an uphill battle for Fido's life. The earlier the intervention, the better.

When my dogs get sick, my stomach turns into knots. First, I get worried about the dog, then I get worried about my bank account. I'm thinking "What the heck did he eat now?!" Over the years living with bull terriers, I have learned that taking the wait and see approach is going to compromise the dog health and cost more in vet bills. Remember, most bull terriers will not show signs they are not feeling well until they are really, really sick. I know, especially four different dogs and six abdominal surgeries later. Over the years, I am getting better at keeping myself calm, thinking it through, and keeping my dog safe and healthier in that process. I try not to jump up and out with the OMG's, but think through it methodically. I hope that this article will help you do the same. I hope it has helped you sort out that "upset stomach" Above all, any concerns with your bully's health, call your veterinarian. It is better to be safe than sorry.

Thanks for reading

S McGee.