What is Mega Esophagus: Mega E

Megaesophagus is a condition where there is decreased or absent motility (movement, muscular contractions) of the esophagus. The esophagus is the tube that carries food and water from the throat to the stomach. With megaesophagus, passing food all the way to the stomach becomes difficult, and the food may be regurgitated back up into the throat. This reduced motility usually results in dilation of the esophagus.

What are the symptoms of Mega E

The most common symptom of Mega E is Regurgitation. Regurgitation is a passive return of food or liquids that have been ingested back to the mouth. Regurgitated material is usually moist but not fully digested. Vomiting, on the other hand, is a active process that involves the muscles of the belly, diaphragm and ribs to actively expel stomach and intestinal contents out of the mouth.

Feeding your Mega E Furbaby

1) Feed (and water) your dog vertically. This means the spine should be straight up and down, with the dog seated in the “beg position” every time the dog receives anything by mouth (food, water, medication, treats). Feeding your dog elevated is not enough because the esophagus is still at an angle and food can still accumulate in pouches and pockets. There are a variety of ways to feed vertically. There is a specially designed chair called the Bailey Chair, which you can build for your dog. This is highly recommended and with the proper fit assures your dog is correctly positioned and supported. It is also important to feed your dog slowly and not allow gulping. The same vertical position is necessary for water. Allowing your dog to drink from a bowl on the floor is usually a problem. Many people add enough water to their dog’s food to avoid this potential problem. A dog generally needs 1 ounce of water per pound of body weight per day, more if it is very active. Some people use unflavored gelatin to make water cubes to help hydrate their dog if liquid alone causes problems.

2) Keep your dog vertical for a minimum of 15-20 minutes after each meal. Yes, this sounds like a hassle, but the difference it makes in your dog’s health and quality of life will be well worth it. The time spent vertical will allow gravity to empty anything in the esophagus into the stomach, which will in turn help minimize regurgitation. You will need to see what amount of time works best for your dog.