

Which Is Worse: The Offensive Odor or the Underlying Condition?

Read this today if you're dying to get rid of the nasty smells your dog produces. It can stem from any of these seven causes, plus a few 'bonus' reasons. Some breeds are even highly predisposed to it - is yours? Here's the No. 1 issue to look at before anything else.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Most problems of flatulence in dogs have a dietary cause. Less common reasons for gassiness can include swallowing excessive amounts of air while eating, and breed predisposition
- Certain gastrointestinal diseases can have flatulence as a symptom. These include inflammatory bowel disease, pancreatitis, and exocrine pancreatic insufficiency
- Additional causes of flatulence in dogs include the disruption of a healthy microbiome from intestinal parasites, and antibiotic therapy
- Addressing the diet and ensuring balanced GI microflora are the first steps in resolving a problem with canine gassiness

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Before I get started on this lovely subject, let's get a couple of definitions out of the way:

- Flatulence is the excessive formation of gases in the stomach and small intestine.
- Flatus is gas expelled through the anus. Street name: Farting.

If your dog has flatulence, it means he's experiencing a lot of gassiness in his belly and bowels. If your dog has flatus, he's sharing his gassiness with the family.

Reasons Lassie Could Be Gassy

There are several reasons a dog may have flatulence. The formation of gases in the digestive tract is the result of bacterial fermentation, which almost always has a dietary cause.

- Your dog's food and/or treats might contain indigestible carbohydrates, especially soluble and fermentable fibers, and less-digestible meat products.
- Dogs with food allergies, IBD, dysbiosis (aka "leaky gut") or sensitivities often have flatulence as a symptom.
- If your pet's diet contains soybeans or other bean meals, it could be causing gassiness. There are many reasons beyond flatulence to avoid pet foods containing soy, and beans in general have no place in a species-

appropriate diet for carnivores. Pet food manufacturers add plant proteins to their formulas to boost the overall protein percentage, instead of using more expensive, and species-appropriate, animal protein.

- A dietary indiscretion, meaning your dog ate something he shouldn't have, can cause gas.
- Dogs fed one type of food exclusively for an extended period of time often have digestive issues, including gassiness, with a sudden change in diet. Even dogs fed a raw, species-appropriate diet can develop sensitivity to a food they eat over and over again. Overfeeding too much of even the right foods can lead to problems in the digestive tract.
- Some dogs seem predisposed to flatulence, including many brachycephalic breeds such as the Boxer, Bulldog, and Boston Terrier. (However, I don't recommend, if you have a gassy brachy, that you just write it off to a breed tendency. It's important to rule out solvable dietary issues and potential underlying health problems first.)
- Finally, it's also possible that dogs who gobble their meals and swallow large amounts of air experience increased flatus as a result. However, aerophagia (excessive air swallowing) by itself shouldn't cause a stinky gas problem.

GI Disease and Flatulence

Certain medical conditions can increase flatulence in dogs, including GI disorders that involve malabsorption of nutrients in the intestine. The poorly absorbed nutrients encourage fermentation in the colon, which creates excessive, smelly gas.

In inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), the GI tract is infiltrated with inflammatory cells that alter the environment of the intestines and disrupt normal microflora (friendly bacteria). This can lead to bacterial overgrowth that inhibits the ability of the intestine to absorb nutrients. In pets with IBD, gassiness is actually one of the least concerning symptoms, since these animals are also often suffering from weight loss, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and protein loss.

Intestinal parasites like giardia and parvovirus can also cause flatulence in dogs by disturbing the ability of the intestine to absorb nutrients. Another culprit is antibiotic therapy. Antibiotics kill off friendly bacteria right along with pathogenic bacteria, which can contribute to flatulence.

Diagnosing Flatulence-Related Disorders

Generally speaking, a gassy dog who also has abdominal pain or distention, vomiting, diarrhea, or other signs of GI upset is more likely to have an underlying GI disease.

GI imaging, including ultrasound, is often used to aid in diagnosing these dogs, along with blood tests to look for conditions like IBD, pancreatitis, and exocrine pancreatic insufficiency (EPI). The serum trypsin-like immunoreactivity (TLI) test is used for EPI, and the canine pancreatic lipase immunoreactivity (cPLI) is the preferred test for pancreatitis. Sometimes endoscopic or surgical biopsies are needed when IBD is suspected.

Additional tests may be needed to measure serum cobalamin and folate concentrations to check for diseases of the small intestine.

Sometimes a motility issue can cause excessive flatulence. These disorders may show up on an x-ray or ultrasound, but not always, making them more difficult to diagnose.

Addressing Your Gassy Dog's Diet

When there is no clinical evidence of GI disease (and even when there is), one of the first things I do with patients with excessive gassiness is address the diet.

It's often beneficial to put a pet with GI upset on a bland diet for a time. The bland diet I recommend is ground, cooked turkey and canned pumpkin or cooked sweet potato vs. beef and rice.

Canned 100% pumpkin is rich in soluble fiber (the type that dissolves in water to form a viscous gel, which also coats and soothes irritated bowels). Rice is a complex carbohydrate that can be fermented in the GI tract, potentially exacerbating a problem with flatulence.

My reason for recommending turkey is simple: hamburger has more fat, which can worsen GI upset, and boiling ground beef doesn't substantially decrease the fat content.

You can easily find fat-free ground turkey or turkey breast in most grocery stores, along with 100% solid packed pumpkin in the baking aisle (make sure it's not pumpkin pie filling), or you can cook up a fresh pumpkin, if you're so inclined. Organic canned pumpkin is also becoming more readily available.

If your dog doesn't like pumpkin or has a turkey allergy, you can substitute skinless, cooked, mashed sweet potatoes, and cooked chicken breast or cod fish (but be aware that fish has a higher percentage of naturally-occurring fat than poultry).

While feeding your dog a bland diet, you should be thinking about what's next in terms of nutritional requirements. Bland is fine for a short time, but balance in the diet is crucial.

I recommend you work with a holistic or integrative veterinarian to plan next steps. You may need to transition your pet from processed food to a fresh, balanced, species-appropriate diet. Or you might want to select a novel protein source — one your pet has either never consumed or hasn't for a long while. This will give the GI tract and your dog's immune system a rest.

It might also be advisable to select a novel vegetable or fiber source as well, to create an anti-inflammatory menu that will support the function of both the large and small intestine. If you believe your pet could be reacting to a specific food in her diet consider completing Dr. Dodd's **Nutriscan saliva test**.

You and your holistic vet should also discuss appropriate supplements, including a high-quality pet probiotic to help heal and reseed the gut with healthy bacteria. Keep in mind that there are many different types of probiotics, each having its own merit and benefit. Some animals can't tolerate milk-based probiotics. Others can't tolerate probiotics derived from yeast cultures or even certain strains of non-dairy organisms.

Most gassy dogs benefit from adding a digestive enzyme to their meals, as well. The type, strength and specific enzyme blend can be customized to your dog's specific issues, for instance, some dogs benefit from an added source of hydrochloric acid, such as betaine HCL.

I encourage you to work with your vet to build a comprehensive protocol for your dog that addresses not only dietary issues and beneficial supplements, but also vaccinations, the use of drug therapy, and any potential toxins in your pet's environment or lifestyle that could be contributing to digestive issues.

Additional Suggestions for Reducing Flatulence

You can try to decrease the amount of air your dog swallows by eliminating stressors associated with eating. Provide a quiet, solitary environment at mealtime, insuring your dog is separated from other pets or people that might cause him to eat competitively/quickly. Also try feeding smaller, more frequent meals from a **bowl that slows the pace of eating**.

Make sure your dog is well-exercised, as there is some evidence that dogs who get the least amount of exercise have the greatest problem with gassiness. Also insure your pet gets ample opportunities to poop each day.

Sources and References

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