

Addition of antifoaming agents to feeds and water during periods of risk help in bloat prevention.



Kenya Climate Smart  
Agriculture Project



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## PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF BLOAT TO REDUCE DEATHS IN SHEEP, GOATS AND CATTLE



## Management of bloat to reduce deaths in ruminant animals

### What is Bloat?

Bloat is a form of indigestion marked by excessive accumulation of gas in the rumen. Bloat is a risk when animals are grazing on young, lush pasture, particularly if the pasture has high legume content (clover, medics or lucerne). Ruminant animals produce large volumes of gas during the normal process of digestion. This gas either is belched up or passes through the gastrointestinal tract. The condition affects all ruminant animals.

### Types of bloat

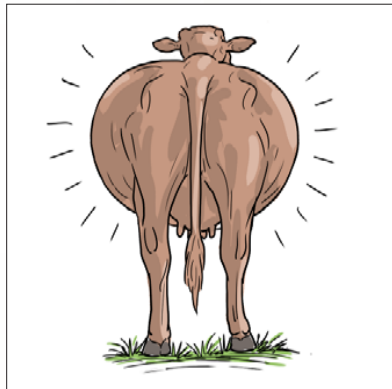
There are two types of bloat:

1. **Frothy bloat** - this is where gas builds up in a foam or froth above the liquid/semi-liquid fraction of the rumen content and the normal belching is inhibited.
2. **Free gas bloat** - It occurs when there is a physical obstruction (e.g. potato) to eructation and so gas is trapped within the rumen. It may occur simply through a prolonged period of lying down on one side (lateral recumbency) such that fluid in the rumen covers the exit through which gas escapes (the cardia of the rumen).

### Major clinical signs

The condition presents the following clinical signs

- Animals stop grazing
- Reluctance to move
- Distended left abdomen
- Eyes bulging
- Straining to urinate/defecate
- Rapid breathing - mouth may be open with tongue protruding
- Staggering gait May appear agitated or distressed



*Extended abdomen due to bloat*



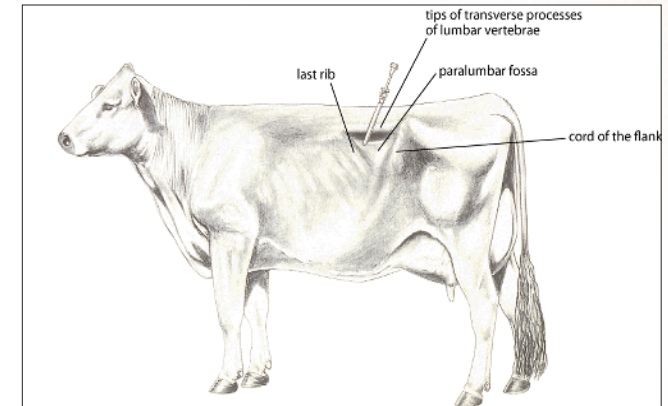
*Dead cow due to bloat*

### Disease with similar signs

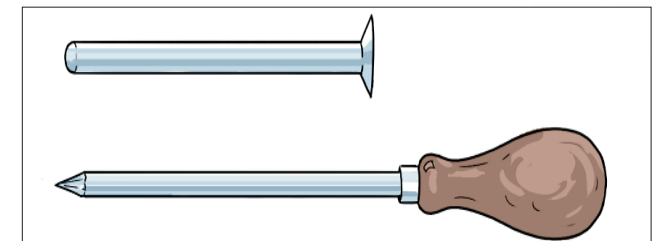
Rumen acidosis and grain overload.

### Treatment

- In a few cases a trocar and cannula punched through the side into the rumen will relieve gassy bloat (free gas) when a stomach tube has not worked.



*Body site for punching (cannulation)*



*Trocar and cannula*

- For frothy bloat, antifoaming agents that disperse the foam should be given by stomach tube. The antifoaming agents include non-toxic oils, such as mineral or vegetable oils, administered into the rumen using a stomach tube or drench. In severe cases of bloat, surgical intervention may be needed.

### Prevention

The condition can be prevented by avoiding grazing animals on lush pasture and legumes.

Feeding on hay before releasing animals to pasture fields assists in arresting this situation.