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Flatulence – farting.

Imagine everyone is gathered together for a relaxing evening of snacks and television when gradually there is no way to avoid or ignore the odors being emitted by the otherwise happy family dog – yep they fart. Jokes abound but really what one wants is a solution to this problem, especially if it is ongoing.

Looking at the science of flatulence.

Flatulence comes from an excess of gases in the intestinal tract. These gases may represent air that has been swallowed, gas produced in the biochemical process of digestion, gas diffusion from the bloodstream, or gases produced by the bacteria that populate the intestinal tract.

Over 99% of the gases that pass from the intestinal tract are odorless - the gases with objectionable odors are typically those containing hydrogen sulfide.
Flatulence is a normal biological function.
A surprising amount of air is swallowed with the simple act of eating and if this is not burped out, it must exit through the other end.
The amount of air swallowed tends to be increased when dogs feel they must eat quickly or in the brachycephalic breeds who tend to breathe more by mouth rather than by nose.
Swallowed air tends not to have objectionable odor.
The really stinky gases are produced by colon (large intestine) bacteria.
Dietary fiber in dog food is not readily digestible by the dog's own enzyme systems but is readily digested by the gas-producing bacteria of the colon.
As these fibers are broken down, gases are produced.
A diet heavy in fibers tends to favor these gas-producing organisms.
The more supportive the intestinal environment, the more bacteria there will be and ultimately more gas will be produced.

Can you manage this?

Feed smaller meals several times daily instead of one larger daily meal.
Feed a +- 20% mixture (prorate to the feed pan) of dry fiber foods, canned or cooked pumpkin and or sliced or shredded semi cooked cabbage, cauliflower spinach – bran cereals.
Discourage rapid eating by placing an over-turned small bowl inside the dog's regular food bowl.
This prevents the dog from taking as large a mouthful.
Avoid soy and peas in the diet.

Avoid any treats containing milk, cheese or other forms of lactose.
Avoid fresh or dried fruit treats.
Change to a high digestibility/low residue diet.
There are therapeutic diets sold at most veterinary offices that would be perfect.

Ideally, cooked white rice would be the diet's carbohydrate source.
If possible, take the dog for a walk within 30 minutes of eating so as to encourage passing gases outside.
Avoid canned foods containing the texturing ingredient "carrageenan."
Changing to a low residue diet means that most of the nutrients of the food are digested and absorbed by the dog before they reach the colon where the gas-forming bacteria are.
This means there will be less food for the gas-forming organisms which will ultimately mean fewer gas-forming organisms and less gas formed.
Sometimes just going through a case and/or bag of such a low residue diet solves the problem and the dog can return to a regular food afterwards.
If necessary, the therapeutic diet can become the dog's regular food.
Sometimes medication is needed.
A *"carminative"* is a medication that reduces flatulence.
There are an assortment of available products but unfortunately most are not helpful or not even labeled for animal use.
Changing the diet and ruling out actual intestinal disease – "*by daily adding digestive bacteria supplants to the feed pan"* are of primary importance in addressing flatulence.

***About probiotics*.**

There are many ineffective probiotics being marketed so it is important to use one (Protexin is recommended) that has been shown to actually contain multi strain live cultures and that its cultures actually withstand stomach digestion so as to populate the small intestine with beneficial friendly bacteria.
It is unknown if this type of product would really help in flatulence as it is asking a great deal for such bacteria to travel all the way to the colon and attempt to displace the gas-forming resident bacteria.
Still, these are unlikely to be harmful and may be beneficial in other ways.

About pancreatic Enzyme supplementation.

In the absence of exocrine pancreatic insufficiency, it is unlikely that a dog patient would be helped by extra digestive enzymes.
Further, this treatment is relatively expensive for something that only may be helpful.

About activated charcoal tablets.

Not likely to be effective as the charcoal binding sites are filled on the journey from mouth to colon and by the time the tablet sees the gas-forming large bowel bacteria, it has essentially been used up.

About simethicone.

May control the volume of gas produced but not the odor.
It is an antifoaming agent that reduces gas bubbles.