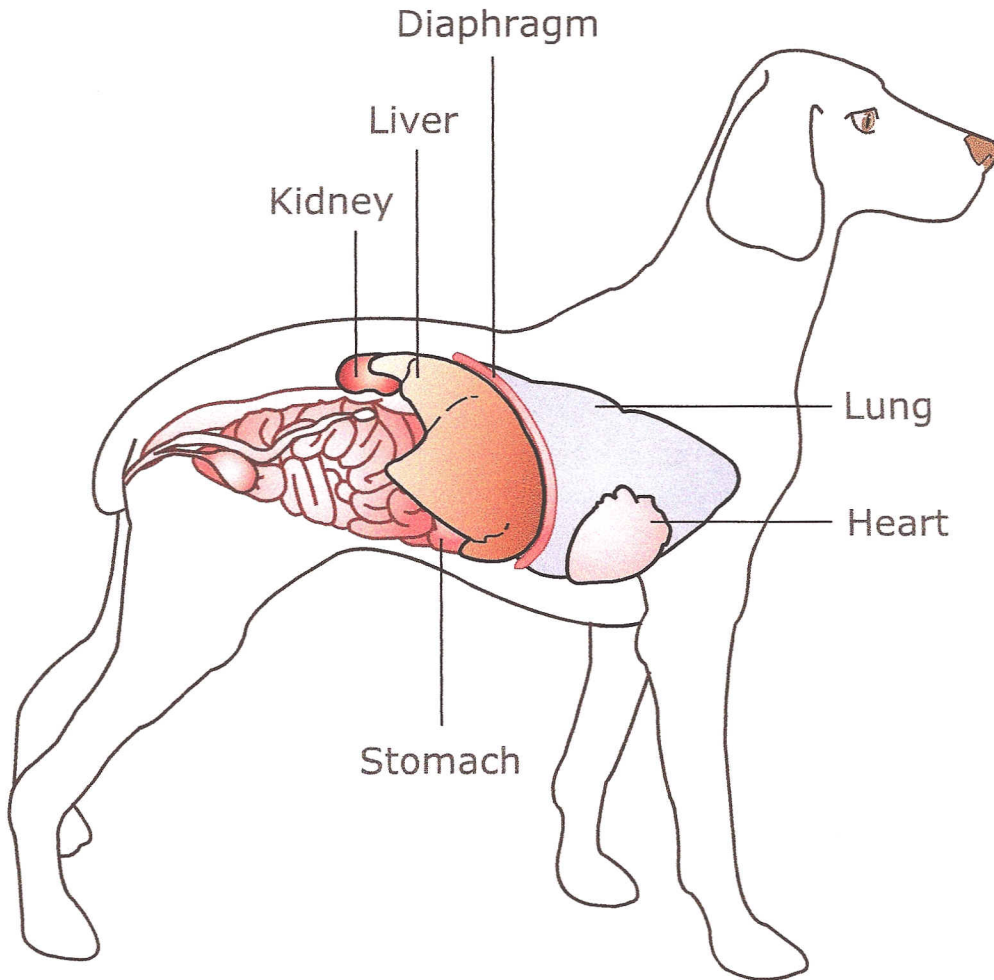


Abdominal and Thoracic Organs - Dog: Relative position of organs to diaphragm, diaphragmatic function.



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The diaphragm forms a physical separation between the chest and abdomen. It is a strong muscular sheet that attaches to the ribs and alternately contracts and expands during normal breathing, allowing the lungs to function properly. The liver sits immediately behind the diaphragm and moves back and forth with it. In both the abdominal and thoracic cavities, there is normally a small amount of fluid that lubricates the organs and reduces friction. If there is an increase in the amount of fluid in either cavity, the function of the diaphragm will be impaired, and the lungs will not be able to expand or contract properly. If the diaphragm is not formed properly, or is torn, usually as a result of trauma, a condition called a diaphragmatic hernia may occur. A diaphragmatic hernia impairs the normal functioning of the diaphragm, leading to respiratory distress. For further information on this or other related conditions, refer to our Client Education Handout Series.