

Talking Points with Customers about DCM & Resources

About DCM

DCM is a disease of a dog's **heart** muscle that results in weakened contractions and poor pumping ability... Which can lead to an **enlarged heart** and **congestive heart failure**.

Which Breeds Are Affected?

Although the root cause of DCM remains **unknown**. And even though *initially* the condition appeared to be more common in certain breeds. The FDA has received reports of DCM in a **wide range of breeds**, including many not genetically prone to the disease.

Likely Linked to Diet

Since announcing its investigation in July 2018... FDA researchers have observed that most of these DCM cases were associated with animals eating **dry dog foods**. However, Dogs eating raw, semi-moist, and wet diets were also affected.

What Types of Dog Food?

Researchers found that over 90 percent of the reported recipes were **grain-free**. And that, **Most of these animals ate diets that appeared to contain high concentrations of peas, chickpeas, lentils... or various types of potatoes.** Yet some dogs consumed diets that contained grain, some were even semi-moist or raw too.

Which Brands?

The FDA reminds readers...

"It's important to note that the reports include dogs that have eaten grain-free and grain containing foods and also include vegetarian or vegan formulations. They also include all forms of diets: kibble, canned, raw and home-cooked. "Therefore, we do not think these cases can be explained simply by whether or not they contain grains, or by brand or manufacturer.

The Agency goes on to assure dog owners...

"To put this issue into proper context, the American Veterinary Medical Association estimates that there are 77 million pet dogs in the United States. "As of April 30, 2019, the FDA has received reports about 560 dogs diagnosed with DCM suspected to be linked to diet. Tens of millions of dogs have been eating dog food without developing DCM."

The FDA also makes the following **logical observation**...

The prevalence of reports in dogs eating a grain-free diet might correlate also to market share: these products have become exceedingly popular over the last several years. Which would certainly explain the higher number of DCM cases associated with these same brands.

What's the Cause?

Based on its latest update, The FDA has still not discovered why certain dog foods may be associated with the development of DCM. In fact, the Agency now believes the connection between diet and DCM is a **complex scientific issue** involving **multiple factors**. Still, Even though it's **not clear** exactly what it is about these diets that may be connected to DCM in dogs, there are a number of possible causes.

For example: **Taurine deficiency** is a well-documented, potential cause of some cases of DCM. Yet it's not likely to be the only cause. According to Dr. Lisa Freeman, a veterinary nutritionist at Tufts University, "most dogs being diagnosed with DCM do not have low taurine levels". It's **not reasonable** to assume a **taurine deficiency** is the definitive **cause** of DCM.

The One Common Thread

According to the FDA, researchers have uncovered one **dietary feature** common to a large number of DCM cases... “The common thread appears to be legumes, pulses (seeds of legumes), and/or potatoes as main ingredients in the food. This also includes protein, starch and fiber derivatives of these ingredients. “Some reports... indicate that the pets were **not eating any other foods for several months to years** prior to exhibiting signs of DCM. Most of these animals appeared to eat diets that contain **high concentrations** of plant-based protein “boosters”. These include items like pea protein, dried peas, and potato protein. Or a number of legumes (ingredient splitting) located near the top of the ingredients list.

8 Things You Can Do Right Now to Lower Your Dog’s Risk

Until the FDA completes its study and releases its final report, it makes good sense to apply **science and logic** to all your feeding decisions. So, consider these **commonsense tips**...

1. Since vegetable protein tends to be **incomplete** (deficient in certain essential amino acids needed by a dog to sustain life), avoid brands that derive most of their protein from legumes and other plant-based protein boosters
2. Don’t avoid any brand just because it contains peas, **legumes** or potatoes. In *reasonable* amounts, studies have not found these ingredients to be toxic
3. Avoid brands that list pea protein, potato protein, or other plant-based protein **concentrates** among their first few ingredients
4. Avoid brands that employ ingredient splitting to hide the fact that their recipes are dominated by plant-based **protein boosters** (peas, beans, lentils, etc.)
5. Consider switching your dog to a quality **grain-inclusive** product
6. Focus on the **recipe**. Not the brand. In an effort to please consumers, companies sometimes replace meat with cheaper plant-based alternatives. Yet they offer other products with superior designs
7. Don’t put all your eggs in one basket. **Diversify**. Since no dog food can ever be perfect, consider using diet rotation to lower the risk of *endlessly* feeding your pet the same menu
8. Need help? Consider **switching** your dog’s current diet to one of the many found on our best dog foods lists

The Bottom Line

Final results are **still not available**. And there’s no way to know how long the FDA’s investigation will take. Yet the Agency is hopeful that as more data becomes known, its scientists will gain a better understanding of the possible connection between diet and DCM.

- Be patient.
- Don’t overreact.
- And don’t be frightened by all the **well-meaning** yet **misguided advice** you’ll surely encounter on the Internet.
- Even from **uninformed** professionals.
- Base your feeding decisions on facts and science.
- Including **accurate label analysis**.
- Talk to your Dog Food’s Brands Customer Service Team with Question

Our Very Best Advice

Since there’s **no such thing** as a **perfect dog food**, You may wish to consider diet rotation when feeding your pet.

RESOURCES

- **You Pet Food Brands Website or Customer Service Number**
- **FDA FAQ Sheet:** <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/animal-health-literacy/questions-answers-fda-center-veterinary-medicines-investigation-possible-connection-between-diet-and>
- **Alaska Mill And Feed Pet & Garden Website: Learning Center**