



Important Information Regarding Grain-Free Diets

Dear Clients,

This year, anecdotal reports emerged that some grain-free diets are potentially contributing to a heart disease known as dilated cardiomyopathy in our beloved dogs. This is a new development that we are taking seriously in the care of our canine patients.

Please follow this link to read the FDA announcement:
FDA Alert: Concern with grain-free diets, taurine deficiency and heart disease
(<https://www.fda.gov/animalveterinary/newsevents/cvmupdates/ucm613305.htm>)

What does grain free mean?
There are no cereal grains in the food such as wheat, rice, oats, corn, barley. If you are unsure if your dog food contains grains, please feel free to contact us and we will assist you.

This article is a statement provided by veterinary nutritionists at University of California:
UC Davis Veterinary Hospital: Update from Nutrition Services on Concern Between Diets and DCM in Dogs
(<https://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/news/update-nutrition-services-concern-between-diets-and-dcm-dogs>)

- What are we recommending:
1. Transition your dog from grain-free food to one that has grains. Please see below for further guidance on choosing optimal brand and formula.
 2. Test your dog's taurine level if he or she has been on long-term grain-free diets, particularly so if the diet has not been one that meets WSAVA criteria (see below) If taurine level is low, we will advise on supplementation.
 3. If you absolutely love your grain-free diet and prefer not to switch, we recommend testing your pet's taurine level and optimally, imaging the heart via an echocardiogram (ultrasound) to evaluate for signs of associated pathology.
 4. There is also the option to supplement taurine (without testing first) and changing to a diet that has grain. The supplementation would give the taurine level a boost while allowing the diet change to take effect.

What do we recommend you feed your pet?
The brands we recommend meet the World Small Animal Veterinary Association, WSAVA, criteria. Please note there are various tiers of quality within each of these brands. If you would like assistance in choosing the proper formula, we are happy to help!
Examples include Purina brands (ProPlan, Merrick, Chow, ONE, etc), Hill's brands (Science Diet, Healthy Advantage, etc.), Mars brands (Royal Canin, Iams, Eukanuba, Nutro, Pedigree, etc.)
Purina, Hill's and Royal Canin/Mars all have boarded Diplomates of ACVN on staff as well as PhD Animal Scientists and

PhD Nutritionists that work throughout various levels of the companies.

Here is a link to WSAVA recommendations in choosing balanced diets for our pets:

WSAVA Guidelines, "How to choose a diet for your pet"

(<https://www.wsava.org/WSAVA/media/Arpita-and-Emma-editorial/Selecting-the-Best-Food-for-your-Pet.pdf>)

Feeding diets that contain grains is healthy for your dog, unless she has been specifically diagnosed with a gluten or grain sensitivity. These cases are uncommon. Generally, the most recognized dietary allergens in dogs include beef, dairy and chicken, in other words, animal proteins and not grains.

Disadvantages to avoiding grains: 1) potatoes and/or legumes (peas, chickpeas, lentils, etc) have fairly limited digestibility research within the pet food industry compared to the decades of nutrition research on corn, rice, wheat, barley, and sorghum; 2) potatoes and legumes as raw material ingredients can have more variable digestibility depending on their source and small to medium pet food companies (the ones who heavily promote "grain-free") may lack the resources or institutional knowledge to know how to select ingredients, how to properly formulate and process a food, and why any of this is important; and 3) "grain-free" diets often have lower fiber levels compared to diet with whole grains, and these lower fiber levels (a poor digestibility of the potato or legumes included) may not adequately support GI health in some dogs.

As always, we are committed to your family and the health of your pet. Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

Warm Regards,

Jennifer Lesser, DVM