

SMARTVET



Newsletter

November 2018

Grain-Free Diets and Heart Disease

Grain-Free diets are an incredibly popular feeding choice for our pets. Many of our clients are feeding grain-free diets at this time. This is due to great marketing by pet food companies, emotional appeals, and the perception that the high priced diets meant better quality. There is in fact no evidence that a grain-free diet is better for your pet. In fact, grains are an important source of vitamins and minerals and it is harder to balance a diet without them. There is now a recognized link between feeding grain-free diets and an increase in heart disease. Some of these cases are reversible and some of these cases are not.

There are over 90 types of foods/brands involved in the enormous scientific investigation into the connection between grain-free diets and canine heart disease. We know part of the issue is due to lack of Taurine. It's been long-established that insufficient taurine levels can cause dilated cardiomyopathy in some dogs and cats, but there is a new unknown component in addition to the lack of Taurine that is causing dilated cardiomyopathy in 16% of cases.

The underlying cause has not yet been identified but nutritionally incomplete and poorly formulated grain-free diets are suspected.

Research studies are currently underway and best practices will continue to evolve, but what we know now is that grain-free diets are a risk factor for heart disease.

What we recommend:

- Feed a diet provided by a major manufacturer with long-standing market presence using traditional ingredients. Avoid grain-free diets and small "boutique" pet foods. If doing an at home diet, please contact a nutritionist to make sure it is correctly balanced.
- If your pet has true dietary restrictions, use a prescription diet. Remember, most food allergies are to protein (chicken, beef, etc) and not to grain.
- Any sign of heart disease such as weakness, heart murmur, or arrhythmia should be investigated.
- Report problems to the FDA <https://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth/ReportaProblem/ucm182403.htm> so we can continue getting answers and make better recommendations to our clients.

At SmartVet we have taken all grain-free products off of our shelves in response to the FDA report. Please speak with our staff or your veterinarian at your next appointment about food recommendations.

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Tuesday, November 6th we will close at 5pm so that all of our employees can make it to their polling place to VOTE.

www.Petfoodology.org

We recommend this website for accurate information about exotic ingredients, food allergies, how to read pet food labels, how to select the best food for your pet, and updates on the relationship between grain-free diets and heart disease.