

# Dog Food Advisor

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## FDA Investigating Potential Link Between Diet and Heart Disease in Dogs



July 12, 2018 — The [FDA has today announced](#) it is investigating a potential connection between grain-free diets and a type of heart disease in dogs known as **dilated cardiomyopathy**... or DCM.

### About DCM

Canine DCM is a disease of a dog's heart muscle that results in an **enlarged heart**...

And which can lead to **congestive heart failure**.

Although the root cause of DCM is **unknown**...

The condition appears to be (at least partly) related to **genetics**.

That's because...

**Larger breeds** (like Great Danes and Boxers) are more frequently affected by DCM.

And far **less common** in **smaller breeds**.

### Possible Link to Diet

[The FDA has recently received reports](#) regarding cases of DCM in breeds **not typically prone** to the disease.

Specifically...

Golden and Labrador Retrievers, Whippets, a Shih Tzu, a Bulldog and Miniature Schnauzers, as well as some mixed breeds.

In addition...

Researchers have observed...

These dogs had been eating pet foods containing peas, lentils, legume seeds, or potatoes as their main ingredients.

Or their protein, starch and fiber derivatives...

Near the **top of the ingredients list**.

Early reports from the veterinary cardiology community indicate the dogs consistently ate these foods as their primary source of nutrition...

For time periods ranging from **months to years**.

High levels of legumes or potatoes appear to be more common in diets labeled “grain-free”.

But it is **not yet known** how these ingredients might be linked to cases of DCM.

### **Taurine Deficiency?**

According to the FDA...

A Labrador Retriever with low blood levels of taurine is recovering from DCM with veterinary treatment...

Which includes taurine supplementation and diet change.

On the other hand...

Four other cases of DCM in atypical breeds, including a Shih Tzu, a Miniature Schnauzer, and 2 Labrador Retrievers...

All presented with **normal levels of taurine**.

Which means...

At this point...

It's premature to conclude that a taurine deficiency is the definitive cause.

## The Bottom Line

As of this moment...

The FDA is **just beginning** its investigation.

So...

Results are **not yet available**.

It will take **time** and considerably **more research** to determine if there's a definite link between grain-free dog foods and DCM.

Until we know for sure...

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.

Base your feeding decisions on facts and science.

Including **accurate label analysis**.

Keep in mind...

The Dog Food Advisor has never favored any recipe **just because it's grain free**.

Nor should you.

Instead...

Our ratings are heavily weighted in favor of our estimate of each recipe's **apparent meat content**.

In fact...

Ratings are automatically **reduced by about a half-star**...

Anytime we find excessive amounts plant-based protein "boosters" (like peas, legumes or non-meat protein concentrates) too close to the top of any ingredients list.

Finally...

Many of the very best dog foods on the market are grain free...

And they're made by some of the most respected companies in the USA and Canada.

We're confident the industry will quickly adapt its recipes to any decisive conclusions reached by the FDA's future findings.

And of course, we'll make any relevant adjustments to our content as needed to reflect these scientific findings (once they become available).

In the meantime...

### Our Very Best Advice

Since there's **no such thing** as a **perfect dog food**...

And because built-in **flaws** tend to be **magnified** when the same food is fed continuously... day after day for a lifetime.

You may wish to [consider diet rotation](#) when feeding your pet.

In any case...

Until the FDA releases its final report...

Be patient. Don't overreact.

And **stay informed**.

We can update you the moment the FDA releases its findings.

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## FDA Update

August 10, 2018 — The FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine has issued [an important Question and Answer update](#) following its initial announcement regarding the subject of this investigation.

## Research Update Veterinary Medical Center Tufts University

November 29, 2018 — Dr. Lisa Freeman, co-author of the [peer-reviewed article](#) regarding this subject, offers a detailed summary in the following article...

[“It’s Not Just Grain-Free: An Update on Diet-Associated Dilated Cardiomyopathy”](#)

After addressing the most common **misconceptions**, Dr. Freeman concludes, “for the vast majority of dogs, we do not yet know what is causing this disease.”

## FDA Update Still No Smoking Gun

February 19, 2019 — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has [published an update](#) on its investigation into reports of dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) in dogs eating certain pet foods.

The update covers reports of DCM received by FDA through November 30, 2018.

Unfortunately, due to the government shutdown, the latest update does not include reports received in December and January due to the lapse in funding between December 22, 2018 and January 25, 2019.

Bottom line?

The FDA summarizes its update by stating:

“The agency has not identified specific recommendations about diet changes for dogs who are not displaying DCM symptoms, but encourages pet owners to consult directly with their veterinarians for their animal’s dietary advice.

