



# Risks of Grain Free and Boutique Canine Diets

Caring Hands Animal Hospital

Going into the pet stores and trying to pick a food to feed your beloved pet can be a daunting task. There is so much information out there on what to and what not to feed your pet. Around 70% of canine diets on the shelves at pet/grocery stores are now grain free. Contrary to popular belief, grain free and boutique diets are not the best diets to feed our pets.

In recent years there have been more and more cases of dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) in dogs. DCM is a serious disease that affects the heart muscle causing enlargement of the heart and weakening of the heart muscle. This disease can result in cardiac arrhythmias, congestive heart failure and sudden death. Due to the increase instance of this disease research is ongoing to try and figure out what is causing this spike in disease. It has been determined that the increased cases of this dilated cardiomyopathy in our dogs is associated with feeding grain free and boutique diets.

## What in the diet is causing heart disease?

- Taurine levels have been evaluated to determine if the cardiac disease is related to a deficiency in this essential nutrient. In some of the cases a taurine deficiency has been diagnosed. However this has not been a common factor in all cases of diet related DCM.
- Not all problems with these diets are related to taurine levels. There is ongoing investigation to determine the other factors in the grain free and boutique diets that are causing DCM. Possible additional nutrient deficiencies or a cardiotoxic agent in the diets are suspected.
- The FDA and veterinary cardiologist are hard at work to determine all the dietary factors that are contributing to DCM

## What if my pet has food sensitivities?

- Food allergies in our pets are rare but do occur. However, grains are not the source of the allergen to our dogs. The portion of the diet that our pets have sensitivities to is the protein source of the diet.
- There is no evidence that grains contribute to health problems in our pets and serve as a source of protein, minerals and vitamins.
- If you suspect your pet has a food sensitivity, please speak to your veterinarian about an appropriate diet.

## What to do if you are feeding a Grain free or boutique diet :

- We highly recommend that you switch your pet off a grain free/boutique diet to help minimize the risks to your pet's health
- Recommended diets are Purina Proplan, Hill's Science diet, and Royal Canin
- Contact your veterinarian if you have any questions or concerns

## Additional information can be found at:

*A broken heart: Risk of heart disease in boutique or grain-free diets and exotic ingredients*

<http://vetnutrition.tufts.edu/2018/06/a-broken-heart-risk-of-heart-disease-in-boutique-or-grain-free-diets-andexotic-ingredients/>

*It's not just grain-free: An update on diet-associated dilated cardiomyopathy*

<http://vetnutrition.tufts.edu/2018/11/dcm-update/>

*Grain-Free food Q and A's:*

<https://cvcavets.com/grain-free-dog-food-qa/>