



Since last year, the FDA has been investigating higher than normal reports of dogs with a form of heart disease known as Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/news-events/fda-investigation-potential-link-between-certain-diets-and-canine-dilated-cardiomyopathy#diet> This type of disease has previously been known to have a genetic component in some breeds, but the investigation began because it was occurring in higher than normal numbers of dogs not predisposed to it. The underlying common denominator for these dogs was that they were being fed grain free diets. Last week the FDA released a list of brands of foods that were associated with the cases of DCM reported to them.

Between 2014 and 2019 there were a total of 524 reported cases of DCM in cats and dogs. Two hundred and twenty-two of them were reported between December 2018 and April of 2019, since people became more aware of a possible link to pet foods. There are 77 million dogs and cats in the US and the vast majority of pets have been eating pet food without developing any problems.

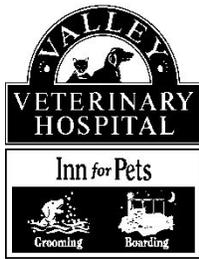
It is currently not known what about these diets is causing some pets to develop DCM. It could be something missing from the diet, or it could be something added to the diets as substitute for the grains that is causing the issue. It is obviously not affecting every dog on these diets, so there are likely other factors as well.

Many people feed grain free diet because their dogs have chronic allergic skin disease. However, the most common allergens in dog food are to proteins, not grains. Beef, dairy and chicken are the most common food allergens in dogs and the grains come after those. In addition, most skin allergic dogs are reacting to environmental triggers. The most common allergens in dogs are to pollens, dust mites and molds.

Additionally, dogs do not get Celiac disease and no dog has ever been proven to have gluten sensitivity. Grain free for pets is a marketing strategy to appeal to people who are trying to eat less gluten themselves. There are some dogs who have sensitivities to food ingredients: i.e. they develop diarrhea or vomiting on some ingredients. If your dog has been shown to have these kinds of GI issues whenever they are fed a diet with grains in it, then it might be worth staying on grain free food.

If you feel your dog needs to be on a grain free diet due to recurring skin problems when they eat diets containing grains or gastrointestinal upset that happens when off grain free, we would recommend avoiding the brands listed in the most recent FDA report on this topic (see above link).

For everyone else, it is probably a better idea to transition your dog to a diet containing grains for now, until we have more information and the pet food companies are able to adjust their formulations.



The brands are ordered by the number of cases linked to them, which ranged from a high of 67 to 10:

- Acana
- Zignature
- Taste of the Wild
- 4Health
- Earthborn Holistic
- Blue Buffalo
- Nature's Domain
- Fromm
- Merrick
- California Natural
- Natural Balance
- Orijen
- Nature's Variety
- NutriSource
- Nutro
- Rachael Ray Nutrish

Most of the reports were associated with dry dog food formulations, but raw food, semi-moist food and wet foods were included.