

November 5, 2020

*The U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) provided an [update](#) on November 3, 2020, regarding an investigation into case reports of a type of canine heart disease known as dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) in dogs not genetically predisposed to the disease. The agency earlier stated that it was exploring the potential factors impacting the development of DCM, including diet. Research to better understand DCM and its causes in dogs is underway.*

*Members of the Pet Food Institute (PFI) are committed to the production of safe, nutritionally balanced pet food. PFI is working in close collaboration with internal experts, including company scientists, veterinarians and nutritionists, to advance the understanding of this issue and support a collaborative approach with FDA.*

*Below, we provide answers to some questions that pet lovers and veterinarians may have about DCM and their dog's diet.*

### **What is dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM)?**

DCM is a specific type of heart disease that, in dogs, results in an enlarged heart and can be serious if left untreated. Some dog breeds, such as the Doberman Pinscher, the Great Dane and the Irish Wolfhound, are recognized as genetically prone to this disease. Other breeds, including the Cocker Spaniel and the Golden Retriever, may be deficient in a key amino acid associated with heart health, which can lead to the occurrence of DCM. Symptoms of DCM include a decreased appetite, lethargy, coughing and collapse. Dogs displaying these signs should be taken to a veterinarian immediately. FDA's investigation is specifically focusing on DCM and not canine heart disease as a whole.

### **What role does diet play in DCM?**

On [November 3, 2020](#), FDA noted that certain forms of DCM “may be affected by the interplay of multiple factors such as genetics, underlying medical conditions, and diet.” It is important to note that the FDA does not recommend any dietary changes.

### **What should I be feeding my dog now? Should I change what I am feeding my dog?**

The first step you can take is to make sure your dog is receiving a complete and balanced diet that is formulated for his or her life stage. Our interactive infographic series “[Nutrition from Nose to Tail](#)” provides fast facts on why a complete and balanced dog food recipe is critical in supporting your pet's health.

If you have questions about a specific product, we recommend that you contact the manufacturer to learn more. FDA has not advised that pet owners change their dog's diet based on the available information, and reemphasized that directive in their newest update. If your pet does experience a change in health, it is important to consult with your veterinarian.

November 5, 2020

### **Should I avoid certain ingredients or grain-free dog food as a whole?**

Pet food ingredients are safe. As makers of the sole source of nutrition for America's pets, PFI members hold pet food safety as the number one priority. U.S. pet food makers use ingredients that have been accepted by the FDA, meet the agency's Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) standard, or have been recognized by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). For more information about how pet food and its ingredients are regulated, [click here](#).

FDA has repeatedly stated that it does not advise any dietary changes for healthy dogs based on the information gathered to date. Millions of dogs eat and thrive on grain-free dog food.

If you have a question about your dog's food, we recommend that you contact the manufacturer to learn more, and visit "[Nutrition from Nose to Tail](#)" to learn more about the nutrition in a dog food recipe.

### **Why do pet food makers use certain ingredients, such as pulse crops, in dog food?**

Pet food recipes that are formulated to provide complete and balanced nutrition offer the essential nutrients that a pet requires for its specific life stage, and at the proper levels. The ingredients used in dog food will help to deliver those nutrients, and some ingredients may help deliver multiple nutrients. When developing a dog food recipe, pet food makers consider many components, such as an ingredient's nutrient profile, its role in helping the food hold shape, flavor, digestibility and shopper preference.

### **Are there new research findings on this issue? What is being done with this research?**

Significant research is underway, and available information suggests that the development of DCM in dogs not genetically predisposed to the disease is a complex issue with multiple confounding factors. FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) Director Dr. Steven Solomon noted on September 29, 2020, that "what we at CVM have learned since these cases first started coming to our attention is that DCM is a scientifically complex, multifaceted issue."

We are committed to learning more about this medical issue and will continue to collaborate with the FDA, veterinarians, stakeholders and pet owners. PFI members are individually and collectively examining the role of diet and nutrition in pet health, including DCM.