

On [July 12, 2018](#), the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) issued a brief stating they are investigating recent case reports of a type of canine heart disease known as dilated cardiomyopathy, or DCM, in dogs not genetically predisposed to the disease. The brief cited a theory that some dogs with DCM may have been fed certain types of diets, and that further research was being undertaken to determine if that theory had merit. That research is expected to take several years and has not been completed. The agency issued an update on its investigation on [February 19, 2019](#) and [June 27, 2019](#).

Members of the Pet Food Institute (PFI) are committed to the production of safe, nutritionally balanced pet food and are working closely together 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 may have about DCM and their dog's diet. PFI serves as the national voice for U.S. pet food and treat makers and its members make 98% of all pet food in the United States. Learn more about us online at [www.petfoodinstitute.org](http://www.petfoodinstitute.org).

### **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, the Golden Retriever, the Boxer and the Cocker Spaniel, are genetically prone to this disease. Symptoms of DCM include a decreased appetite, lethargy, coughing and collapse. Dogs displaying these signs should be taken to the 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?**

The exact cause of recent reported incidents of DCM has not yet been identified, but genetic predisposition is known to be a highly contributing factor to DCM in dogs in general. It is possible that multiple factors play a role, including pet food formulation, ingredients, processing and individual pet physiology. One area that FDA is investigating is the possibility that ingredients and formulations in certain dog food recipes may play in development of DCM in some dogs.

### **What are PFI members doing about this potential issue?**

PFI members take seriously their commitment to provide [safe pet food](#) that delivers complete and balanced nutrition, and they welcome new information that can help them keep this commitment. Member company scientists, veterinarians and nutritionists are currently working closely with one another, ingredient suppliers and veterinarians to further advance the understanding of this issue.

### **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 your pet does experience a change in health, it is important to consult with your veterinarian.

If you have questions about a specific product, we recommend that you contact the manufacturer to learn more. The FDA is also recommending that pet owners seek dietary advice from a trusted veterinarian, who knows your pet and can provide information tailored to their needs. FDA has not advised that pet owners change their dog's diet based on the available information.

### **Is grain-free pet food safe for my pet?**

Millions of dogs eat and are thriving on grain-free dog food. FDA's investigation focuses on certain ingredients that figure more prominently in some pet food products labeled as grain-free, including legumes like peas or lentils, other legume seeds, and potatoes. FDA has not identified any established link between certain ingredients and incidents of DCM.

The exact cause of these cases of DCM is still unknown and may be the result of many factors, including a recipe formulation and processing, and your individual pet. 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 may pet food makers use certain ingredients in dog food?**

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

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

The FDA stated in all three updates, including the most recent [June update](#), that the agency does not advise any dietary changes based solely on the information gathered so far.

### **Should I be concerned if my pet's food contains one of the ingredients mentioned by the FDA?**

FDA has not linked any specific pet food or ingredient to incidents of DCM and has not requested removing or recalling any pet food from the market. It is important to make sure the food you are feeding your pet is formulated to be complete and balanced for a pet's life stage. If you have additional questions related to a specific ingredient we suggest reaching out to the pet food manufacturer. For concerns about your pet's health, we recommend reaching out to your veterinarian.

### **Are pet food ingredients safe?**

Yes. 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](#).