



Grain Free Diets and Cardiomyopathy June 27th Update – Food for Thought –

The idea of feeding a complete and balanced dog food that is possibly causing harm is alarming to any pet food company and pet owner. The FDA and AVMA have been concerned about grain free diets as a potential cause of dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM). This may be a valid concern in selected cases, but when looking at the newest data, this continues to be a complicated situation.

On June 27, 2019 the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) released their latest report on Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM). From January 1, 2014 to April 30, 2019 there have been 515 dogs in the US diagnosed with DCM. With an estimated 77 million dogs in America, this works out to a percentage of 0.0007%. That statistic doesn't make it any easier for the families with dogs affected by this, but it is also important to note that this includes breeds genetically predisposed to DCM. Typically these are large or giant breeds, such as Doberman Pinschers, Great Danes, and Irish Wolfhounds. DCM has also been seen in Cocker Spaniels associated with taurine deficiency, as well as a group of Boxers with DCM that was associated with L-carnitine deficiency. Interestingly, the FDA also has reported that an average of 10-15% of dogs and cats in the US will be diagnosed with some form of heart condition yearly, this works out to over 7 million animals. The FDA will continue to investigate if there is a specific dietary link to development of DCM. The announcement on July 27th indicates no causative scientific link between ingredients or grain-free diets as a whole, only a list of the foods most implicated.

This follows the publication of a comprehensive study from the University of Davis School of Veterinary Medicine on taurine deficiency and dilated cardiomyopathy in golden retrievers fed commercial diets. They looked at twenty-four client-owned golden retrievers with documented taurine deficiency and dilated cardiomyopathy and 52 healthy client-owned golden retrievers. They found that some of the healthy Golden Retrievers had low taurine but no DCM. This follows previous studies that have shown Golden Retrievers may be genetically predisposed to taurine deficiency. They concluded that taurine deficiency and DCM in Golden Retrievers is likely multifactorial, including a combination of dietary, metabolic and genetic factors. The University of Davis study determined that a larger sample size is needed to determine if there is a cause and effect relationship between DCM, taurine deficiency and diet. More concerning is the latest report at the American Academy of Veterinary Nutrition where it was reported that some dogs have normal blood taurine levels with DCM and that these dogs also respond to taurine supplementation. This suggests that there are dogs with a genetic heart taurine transport problem that can be treated with extra taurine as a supplement.



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Pet Nutrition
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Annamaet Petfoods Inc
777 Schwab Road Suite G, Hatfield PA 19440
Office: 267.382.0163 • Fax: 267.382.0817
E-mail: info@annamaet.com
www.annamaet.com



Recent DCM updates have suggested as a precaution, diets for dogs should contain methionine, L-carnitine and taurine. Methionine, a sulfur containing amino acid, is the principle precursor for taurine in the body. Annamaet Petfoods, with our long background in science and our passion for pets, has included methionine in our formulas since we started over 30 years ago. The bioavailability of methionine in many poor quality meat or fish meals (higher ash) may be far lower than higher quality meats and meals. L-carnitine is an amino acid that is often used to treat heart disease, such as cardiomyopathy in dogs. L-carnitine is necessary for heart muscle cells to make the energy needed for them to contract. We have been adding L-carnitine in our formulas for the last nine years. Lastly, much of the current concern over the increase in DCM cases is how it relates to taurine levels. As you are probably aware the principal natural source of taurine in pet foods are meat and fish. Annamaet uses only meat and fish passed fit for human consumption. We use low ash meat and fish, which increases digestibility and can help increase taurine availability. As added precaution, Annamaet started adding additional taurine to all formulas last year.

At Annamaet Petfoods, we pride ourselves on being experts in pet nutrition and use that as a competitive advantage in an industry full of big companies and growing product lines. Annamaet has two nutritionists on staff with over 100 publications in peer reviewed Veterinary or Nutrition Journals. One of these is our founder and CEO, the other is a Board Certified Veterinary Nutritionist. This is a great checks and balances system to help provide optimum nutrition for a long and healthy life for your beloved pet. We have also been doing extensive testing with both independent laboratory analysis and feeding trials for over 30 years. Annamaet will continue to use our nutritional expertise, and do the right thing for your pets and our own, just as we have for the last 32 years.

Robert L Downey
Founder and CEO
Annamaet Petfoods, Inc.

Dr. Joseph Wakshlag DVM, PhD,
DACVN, DACVSMR
Staff Nutritionist
Annamaet Petfoods, Inc.

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