

Dear Clients,

As many of you have heard, there has been a recent concern in the last few months about "grain free" diets being linked to a heart related condition called DCM (Dilated Cardiomyopathy) in dogs. Currently we unfortunately do not have any definitive cause/effect relationship other than to say that there is a correlation with certain types of dog foods and this potentially life threatening condition. Many dogs have improved with a change in diet, but not all the cases have, and not all of them are on any one specific dog food. There are several hypotheses as to the cause, but it is NOT understood at all. Here are a few resources to find out more information about what is currently being investigated and what has been concluded so far:

<https://www.fda.gov/animalveterinary/newsevents/cvmupdates/ucm613305.htm>

<https://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/ResourcesforYou/AnimalHealthLiteracy/ucm616279.htm>

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

At this time, we don't feel that all dogs need to be taken off one of these foods, but we ask that you consider multiple factors in choosing a dog food for your dog. Does he/she have an underlying food allergy/intolerance that requires a special diet? Are there any medical reasons your dog needs to avoid certain ingredients? If the answer is no, and you do not feel comfortable feeding one of these diets, you may want to consider changing. Choosing a diet can be difficult for many people but here are some guidelines that we personally find helpful.

1. Dog foods have statements indicating they are in accordance to AAFCO standards (Association of American Feed Control Officials). They can do so by either "feeding trials" or "by formulation" - Generally speaking, feeds that have undergone feeding trials are typically more reputable than ones that only meet math formulations. For example, just because there is a lot of protein in some really poor quality feed ingredients, does not mean your pet will absorb and utilize it as well as a higher quality protein. This AAFCO statement should be on every bag of food that is approved and is usually very easy to find.

2. Find out if your feed company employs both veterinarians and veterinary nutritionists. You likely will need to call them to ask.

3. Learn to "read the label" - Marketing lines like "Grain Free" and "Holistic diet" are strictly speaking marketing propaganda that have no actual meaning when it comes to labelling but terms like "organic" and "Beef Flavor vs Beef Dinner" have very specific definitions when it comes to legally placing them on the feed bag - To learn more about what is regulated and what these terms mean you can read more here:

<https://www.fda.gov/animalveterinary/resourcesforyou/ucm047113.htm>

Obviously, picking a food is already very overwhelming with more options than most people can process and the honest truth is that as much as we know about nutrition, we are constantly learning more and no one knows it all. If after reading all of this and you still have questions, please feel free to contact us.

Thanks,

Jennifer Sun DVM and the staff at Midstate Veterinary Services.