

# How Diet Affects Your Pet's Heart Health: Diet-related DCM

Presented to you by the Cardiology Booth at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine



# Before You Change Your Pet's Diet:

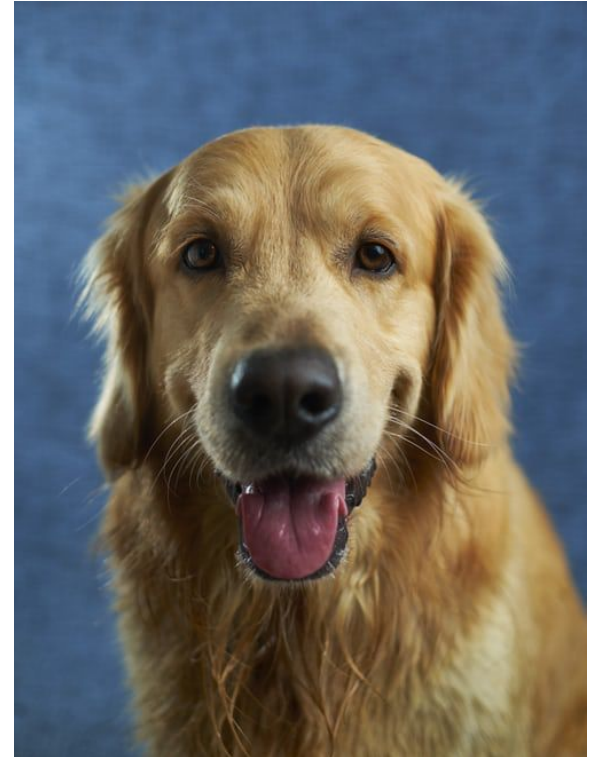
1. Consult your veterinarian. You should always ask your pet's primary care provider if changing your pet's diet is appropriate.
2. Read the feeding instructions. Make sure you are feeding the right amount and that you transition to the new food gradually over a period of 7-10 days.



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# What is Diet-related DCM?

- ★ DCM stands for : Dilated Cardiomyopathy - DCM is a disease that weakens the heart muscle.
- ★ Since the heart's main goal is to pump blood, weakened muscles can mean blood isn't pumped as well
- ★ DCM can be fatal, but if caught early it can be treated successfully for a long time



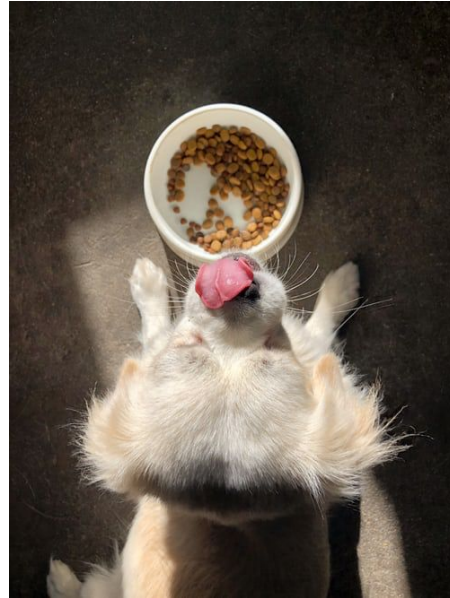
# What predisposes a dog to DCM?

Dilated Cardiomyopathy can be a result of many different factors including:

- ★ Diet : Grain-Free Diets!
- ★ Breed : Genetics!

Breeds that tend to be at higher risk for DCM include:

Golden Retrievers, Dobermans, Boxers, Great Danes, Newfoundlands, Irish Wolfhounds, English Cocker Spaniel, and Portuguese Water Dogs



# What types of food are linked to DCM?

- ★ Grain-Free Diets and diets often considered “boutique” or “nontraditional”
- ★ Some brands that have been linked to cases of DCM:

**Acana**

**Zignature**

**4Health**

**Blue Buffalo**

**Natural Balance**

**Rachael Ray Nutrish**

**Earthborn Holistic**

**NutriSource**

**Nutro**

**California Natural**

**Nature's Domain**

**Fromm**

**Taste of the Wild**

**Merrick**

**Orijen**

**Nature's Variety**

# Why these foods?

- ★ Pet foods that are grain-free usually contain high amounts of lentils, peas, potatoes, and other legumes
- ★ The thought is that DCM is linked to a lack of the amino acid taurine
- ★ Legume ingredients have small amounts of the building blocks needed for a dog's body to make taurine
- ★ The exact details behind the many causes are still being investigated since the link between diet and DCM is a relatively new discovery



Contrary to popular belief, there are no health benefits to your dog eating a grain-free diet. Dogs very rarely have allergies to grains or gluten; food allergies in dogs are almost always related to the protein source, like chicken.

# Common Terms Used in Grain Free Diets

Consult your veterinarian about your pet's diet if the label includes the following terms:

**Zero Grain    Grain Free**

**Wild    Holistic    Natural**

**Lentils    Peas    Potatoes    Real Meat**

**Without Corn    Without Wheat    Without Soy**



# How is DCM Diagnosed?

- ★ The most accurate way to get a diagnosis of DCM is to have a veterinary cardiologist perform an ultrasound of the heart.
- ★ This will show the size and thickness of the heart chambers and walls, allowing the doctor to tell if your dog's heart is enlarged, as well as being able to see how well blood is being pumped.

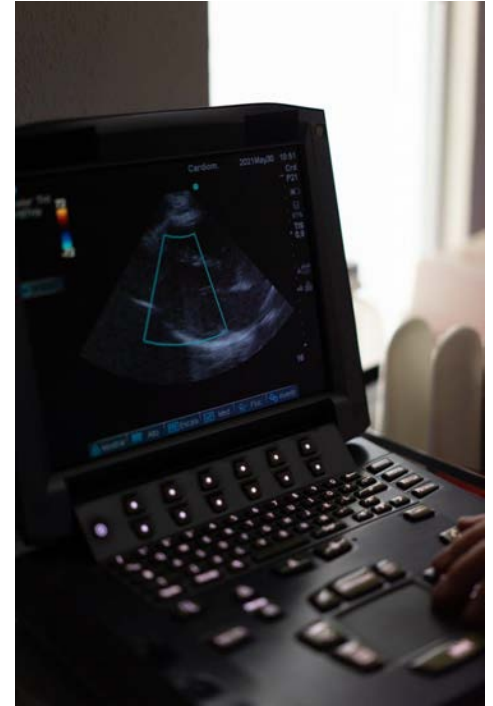


Image by pexels.com

# Treatments!

- ★ Based on the dog's condition, the veterinary cardiologist will choose the best treatment. There are a few types of drugs that can help treat the symptoms.
- ★ Some of these drugs will help the heart muscle squeeze more effectively, and some will reduce the amount of work required to pump all of the blood.
- ★ Some dogs will need to be more aggressively treated than others, and the veterinarian can help determine that

# Should I be worried about my dog?



Image by unsplash.com

- ★ **Always consult your veterinarian if you are suspicious that your dog is showing signs of DCM**
- ★ The outcome can vary depending on many factors, but when caught early enough and properly managed, dogs can go on to live long, happy lives!
- ★ **Talk to your veterinarian to make sure you are feeding the best diet for your dog!**

# Fun Fact!

Many dogs who switched back to a grain-inclusive diet (and received other treatments from a cardiologist) had some amount of reversal of DCM



# Signs of heart problems in dogs

Coughing

Lethargy

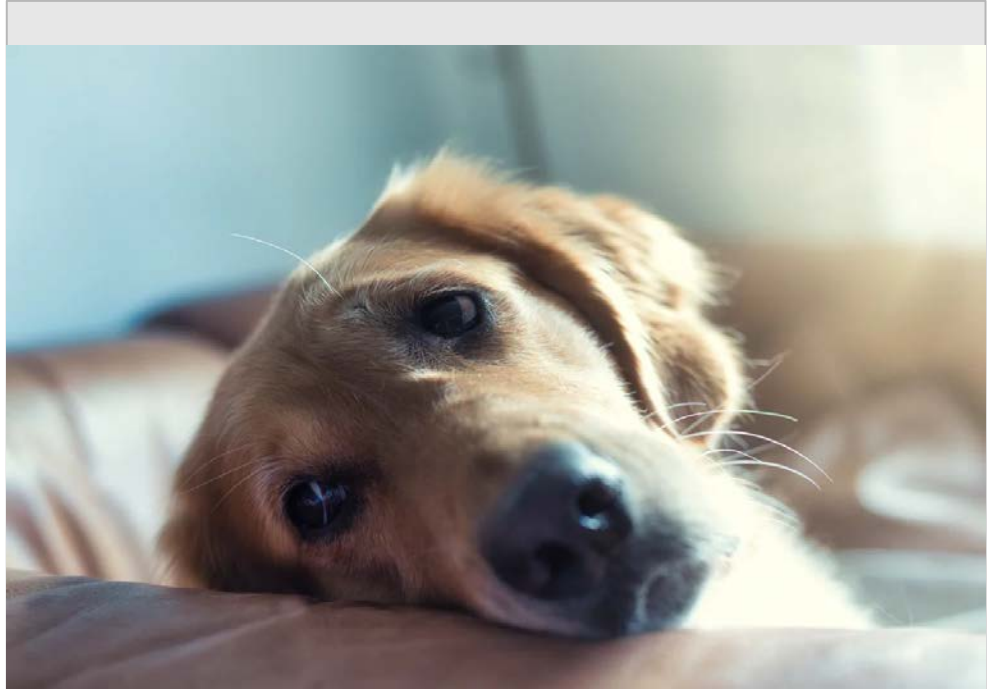
Weight Loss

Weakness

Difficulty Breathing

Abdominal Distention

Exercise Intolerance



# Final thoughts

- The diet you choose for your dog and your dog's breed are not guarantees that they will or won't get DCM.
- A diet change, in addition to regular check-ups, is an easy way to give them the best chance at the longest, healthiest life we all want for our four-legged friends!
- The FDA and researchers are actively studying this topic so that it can be solved as quickly as possible!

# References

Images were used from : [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com), [pexels.com](https://pexels.com)

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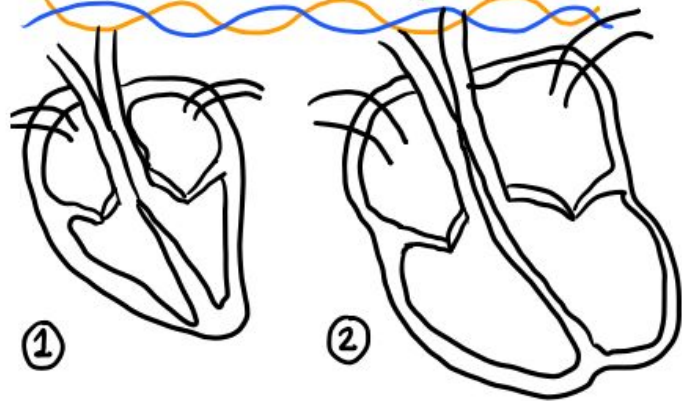
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Check out our coloring page! And determine which is a healthy heart vs. a heart with DCM!



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Color in a healthy heart  
and  
a heart with DCM!

↳ Yowie the detective helps us determine which heart is a healthy heart and which has DCM?



1: healthy 2: DCM



# Quiz Yourself!

1. Which of the following is a symptom of heart disease in dogs?
  - a. Weakness
  - b. Coughing
  - c. Difficulty Breathing
  - d. All of the above
2. What is diet related DCM?
  - a. Shrinkage of the heart due to a high carb diet
  - b. Enlargement of the heart resulting in a reduced pumping function
  - c. When the heart pumps blood too fast
  - d. A condition caused by the heart leaking blood

# Quiz Yourself!

3. Which of the following is a term commonly found in grain free diets?
  - a. Lentils
  - b. Peas
  - c. No Corn
  - d. All of the above
  
4. How is DCM best diagnosed?
  - a. By listening to the heart with a stethoscope
  - b. By observing the common signs and symptoms
  - c. By ultrasounding the heart and looking at cardiac wall thickness
  - d. By taking your pet's temperature

# Quiz Yourself!

5. Which breed has a higher chance of developing DCM because of genetics?
  - a. Doberman
  - b. Yorkshire Terrier
  - c. Corgi
  - d. Chihuahua
  
6. Who should you ask about the best choices for your dog's diet?
  - a. The pet store employee
  - b. Your veterinarian
  - c. Your neighbor
  - d. Google

# Quiz Yourself!

7. Which of these brands of food has been linked to many cases of DCM?
  - a. Purina
  - b. Royal Canin
  - c. Hills
  - d. Acana
  
8. True or false: DCM is always fatal and is irreversible once diagnosed
  - a. True
  - b. False

# Quiz Yourself!

9. What are the pros or health benefits of feeding a grain-free diet?
  - a. Dogs who eat grain-free live longer
  - b. Grains are bad for dogs and cause many health issues
  - c. Dogs who eat grain-free diets get a complete, nutritious diet
  - d. There are no health benefits to your dog eating a grain-free diet
  
10. True or false: The only way a dog can get DCM is by eating a grain-free diet.
  - a. True
  - b. False

# Quiz Yourself - Answers

1. D
2. B
3. D
4. C
5. A
6. B
7. D
8. False
9. D
10. False

# Before you go... Try the crossword puzzle on our website!



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Word Search by superteachworksheets.com



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# Thanks for tuning in!