



## Don't panic!

We're sure by now you've seen the newest report from the FDA about their investigation into any links between DCM and grain free foods. It's being shared like crazy on Facebook and has made both local and national news. And the news does look very scary:

There is a lot going on behind these clickbait headlines.

### The history:

Back in 2014 the FDA began receiving reports of dogs contracting a heart condition, dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM), that is not normally seen in their breed. Initially, the only seeming connection between the cases was their food, as most of them were eating a grain free diet.

In DCM, the heart walls begin to thin and the heart enlarges. It has to work harder to pump blood around, decreasing oxygen delivered to the body or causing blood to build up in the lungs. DCM can be largely genetic; indeed, many larger breeds are known for their predisposition to DCM. DCM can be diet related; Years ago cats were coming down with the same heart condition that was traced back to a lack of taurine in their diet, an amino acid necessary for, among other things, heart health, so it was immediately suspected that the pulses/legumes and potatoes that are used in place of grains might be blocking taurine in dogs, too. DCM can also be due to other diseases and parasites, like hypothyroidism and heartworms. The only positive test for DCM is an echocardiogram, as this shows the heart and its size.

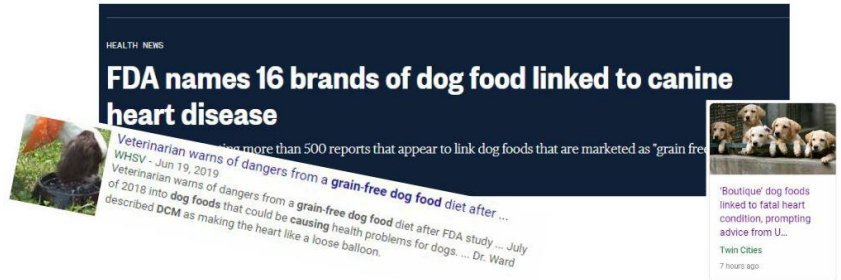
The FDA released their first report in July in 2018. Their original report caused a lot of fear and consternation among dog owners. We always want to do the best for our pets, and the thought that the decisions we make in their best interest might actually have caused harm is upsetting. The information in that first report was misinterpreted and the news spread like wildfire.

The FDA's newest report has not done a lot to clear up the issue. We care very much about this topic, and have been following the news closely, and hope we can help break it down and see what is happening behind the numbers.

### What the report tells us:

There are an estimated 77 million dogs in the US. There are 560 dogs in the FDA study – this represents 0.0007% of the population.

The dogs in the study ate both grain free and grain inclusive diets. The report lists the foods that affected dogs were eating, and while grain free recipes were at the top of the list, a lot of diets that include grain are also mentioned in the report (the chart only shows foods that had over 10 reports; foods from the Big Four – Purina, Hill's, Pedigree, and Iams are mentioned throughout.) These are just the diets the affected dogs were on, not that they caused these cases.



Some of the dogs were not officially diagnosed via an echocardiogram, so it is not known how many actually had DCM.

Some 200 of the dogs listed are breeds that have a genetic predisposition to DCM, so there's no idea if it related

While most of the cases ate dry kibble, every food type was included, even raw and homemade.

It was originally thought that it might be a problem with exotic proteins, such as kangaroo, bison, or duck, that were the cause, but this newest report shows over half the dogs ate chicken and lamb.

It was originally thought that dogs with DCM would have low taurine blood levels, as that is the usual cause of the disease, but many dogs were found to have normal levels.

The FDA themselves say there is a reporting bias in their data; because the information was shared in many breed specific groups, they received more reports including those breeds. It's not a true random sampling good science requires.

Dogs listed in some Facebook groups as recovering from DCM after changing to a grain inclusive diet are also on medications for DCM, meaning there's no way to be sure it was diet caused.

There have been no recalls on any diets to date.

The FDA does not recommend changing food at this point.

The report also states that "the agency believes that the potential association between diet and DCM in dogs is a complex scientific issue that may involve multiple factors."

The FDA also says: "we do not think these cases can be explained simply by whether or not they contain grains, or by brand or manufacturer"

This is still an ongoing investigation, and the reports from the FDA are not by any means the final results. They are still collecting information and conducting studies.

### **Our thoughts:**

While one dog dying from their diet is one dog too many, we feel the FDA released this information way too soon, without any data to back it up. The numbers are too small to get any clear idea of what is happening, and the science is badly done (most of these numbers are not a random sampling of the canine population). People and companies have jumped on this opportunity to push their own foods based on fear. Poor quality diets have a better chance of predisposing your pet to diabetes, obesity, and cancers (over 50% of dogs being overweight). We are what we eat, and our dogs are, too. There is no reason to feed our dogs low quality proteins, byproducts, and cheap, high starch fillers like corn, wheat, and rice gluten. It is impossible to make a cheap, low cost food made with wholesome, natural ingredients.

We firmly stand behind the foods we carry, and the results we have seen in our customer's dogs over the years, and we do not agree with veterinarians recommending low quality foods. Each brand and flavor is carefully selected with a great deal of thought and research behind both the company and the food. For those who want the option, our grain inclusive diet offerings include Country Naturals, Fromm, Farmina, Wellness, Natures Logic; they do not contain potatoes, pulses, and legumes, and are made with high quality, human grade whole meats and meat meals with organ meats and no byproducts. The grains are low glycemic, so they are broken down more slowly without the spikes in blood sugar. Stop by and see what we have to offer.

You can read some veterinarian's opinions on the matter here [Dr Magnuson](#) and [Dr Justin Shmalberg](#).

Read what your dog foods companies have to say on the issue: [Champion](#) (Orijen and Acana), [Fromm](#), [Zignature](#), and [Country Naturals](#).

You can read a synopsis of the report [here](#), and see the full 77 page report [here](#).