

## **Diet Related Canine Dilated Cardiomyopathy**

Can your dog's food kill them? Yes, your dog's food can be deadly. If your dog is eating a food that contains "pulses" (pulses includes peas, pea protein, yellow peas, split peas, chickpeas or any color of dry bean or lentil) they are at high risk for developing Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM).

### **What is Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM)?**

Dilated Cardiomyopathy is a disease of the heart muscle. It causes the heart to not contract as well as it should, and subsequently causes the heart to enlarge. This results in heart failure. DCM can cause abnormal heart rhythms, congestive heart failure, and sudden death. Signs that owners may notice include decreased energy or exercise intolerance, coughing, difficulty breathing, and episodes of collapse.

Diagnosis of DCM is only made after an echocardiogram (an ultrasound of the heart) done by a veterinary cardiologist. Your veterinarian will be able to listen to the heart and lungs for any abnormalities and may be able to see enlargement of the heart on x-rays.

### **Which Foods are Bad?**

It has been found that dogs eating a diet high in pulses as the main source of carbohydrates, are at severely increased risk of developing this deadly heart disease.

We can no longer just say don't feed 'Grain-free food'. For most dogs, there is no health benefit of a food having no grain. If you think your dog has a food allergy (an entire discussion by itself), it is most likely they are allergic to a specific protein (not grains). Many diets add peas in various forms (whole peas, green peas, yellow peas, split peas, pea protein) that when added up, are a high percentage of the diet.

How do you evaluate the quality of a food? There is no one brand or type of food that is better than the rest. Dogs are individuals and have individual needs. Your veterinary team should always be your first source of information. So long as the food has grain (and its main ingredients do not include peas, pulses), it is likely a good food. If you have questions or concerns about the food, you are feeding your dog – please ask! Our goal is to have healthy, happy patients.

### **What do you do if you are feeding a diet containing pulses?**

The first step is to transition your dog to a diet that does not contain pulses in the first 10 ingredients or multiple pulses anywhere on the ingredient list.

FEED a commercially made diet that utilizes chicken, beef, turkey or lamb combined with rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, wheat or soy as the carbohydrate. Don't get taken in by marketing, fads and hype. Look at the science and the numbers. Keep your dog from being added to the ever-growing number of diet-associated DCM dogs. Make sure the food is labeled with an AAFCO statement of nutritional adequacy.

For dogs without heart disease, the first step is the only step.

If your dog is diagnosed with DCM, your veterinarian will need to run diagnostics and potentially start your dog on medications. The sooner a dog is transitioned OFF diets that have a pulse percentage, the better their prognosis. The duration of feeding a pulse-free diet prior to correction has been shown to impact prognosis – the sooner the issue is recognized and corrected, the better the prognosis.