

DEXTER'S DELI

PET HEALTH GUIDE

Ref. 46 v.2



Product Suggestions

HIGH TAURINE FRESH FOOD TOPPERS

- Primal Butcher's Block Topper
- Primal Omega Mussels Topper
- Northwest Naturals Green Lipped Mussels
- Smallbatch freeze-dried Hearts
- Halshan Organ Meats

Main Takeaways

- Grains don't contain taurine, and are *inadequate* sources of methionine and cysteine (dogs use these to create taurine).
- Meat and shellfish are high in taurine, methionine, and cysteine.
- If you feed a dry food diet and are concerned about DCM we strongly recommend adding fresh meat to your pet's diet because it is the richest source of taurine and all the other amino acids your pet needs, all naturally occurring and easily absorbed.

GRAIN OR GRAIN-FREE?

What are the Pros and Cons of With-Grain & Grain-Free Dry Food Diets?

- All dry food diets require starches for manufacturing purposes; to go through the machinery smoothly and create a pellet that stays intact.
- **With-Grain** dry foods get their carbohydrates from ingredients like rice, barley, oats, and quinoa. Grains provide easy-to-assimilate energy, which may be helpful for dogs who have trouble keeping weight on due to their active lifestyle.
- **Grain-Free** dry foods get their carbohydrates from ingredients like peas, lentils, potatoes, and sweet potatoes. They are the best option for pets with allergies to grains. Those made with legumes are low-glycemic, which is important for pets with endocrine disorders.

Look for Quality Ingredients

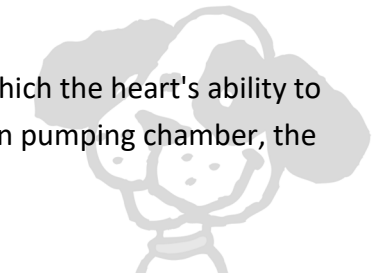
The quality of ingredients is the most important thing to look at when choosing a food for your dog or cat. Dexter's investigates this for you so that you can feel confident about the foods you buy from us.

Why Did My Vet Tell Me To Get a With-Grain Food?

If your vet has told you that there is a risk to your pet's heart health feeding a grain-free dry food, you should know that all the dry foods we carry have taurine added to their formulas to ensure that this key amino acid is plentiful in the diet. The FDA debunked the warning against grain-free diets in 2020, and a 2022 retrospective survey of veterinary cardiologist found no increase in DCM to correlate with the increase of sales of grain-free dry foods.

What is DCM?

Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) is a condition in which the heart's ability to pump blood is decreased because the heart's main pumping chamber, the left ventricle, is enlarged and weakened.



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Learn More

Visit the websites of these veterinarians who have written on this topic for more details and citations:

- *Dr. Judy Morgan*
- *Dr Jean Dodds*
- Dr Karen Becker

Related Pet Health Guide

- Build A Better Bowl
- Don't Leave Dry Food Dry

Product Suggestion

TAURINE SUPPLEMENT

- Herbsmith Taurine Boost



What causes DCM?

This is still being worked out and there are debates within the vet world about the factors involved:

- Often the cause is unknown, but overall it mainly effects large breeds.
- Genetic predisposition is the most common factor. This can be a predisposition to DCM in general, or a predisposition to taurine-deficient DCM in particular.
- Infection or a toxin can damage the heart muscle, but is uncommon.
- Nutritional deficiencies may be implicated when the dog cannot maintain normal amino acid levels, but most of these cases seem to have a genetic component.

What's DCM Got To Do with Grain-Free Dry Food?

In 2018 there were more reported cases of DCM where the development of the disease was unexpected, and vets were noticing a correlation with most of the dogs being fed grain-free dry food so they *speculated* that these diets were the cause. Subsequent analysis has found no evidence that grain-free dry food diets cause DCM, yet much of the public information takes this speculation and jumps to a flawed conclusion.

What's Taurine Got To Do With It?

Taurine is a key nutrient for heart health. It's also necessary for normal bile acid function. Dogs create their own taurine from the amino acids methionine and cysteine (whereas cats must consume taurine directly, which was discovered in the 1980s when dry food recipes became a larger part of the cat market). When caught early, supplementing with taurine can reverse DCM, but only for those dogs that specifically had a taurine deficiency. Very large dogs with slower metabolisms may need more taurine in their body (and most dog feeding trials are done with beagles).

Do I Need to Add a Taurine Supplement?

If your pet has not been diagnosed with low taurine levels or heart abnormalities you don't need to add it. It's better to simply feed a diet with more meat. Fresh meat, either raw or lightly cooked, retains the most nutrition, and retains the most taurine when all juices are included in the meal (so don't drain off the blood or cooking water). The meats with the most taurine are heart, organs, dark meat poultry, and mussels.