



Have you heard?

Boutique, exotic, and grain-free (BEG) diets are NOT currently recommended!

- The FDA is investigating a link between diet and heart disease.
- A total of 273 cases have been reported to the FDA since July 2018
- Out of 196 cases investigated so far, **90% were eating a grain-free diet.**

What are **BEG** diets?

- **Boutique:** usually small companies, only available at specialty stores (PetSmart, Hollywood Feeds), may use unregulated labeling such as “human-grade,” “artisan,” or “holistic.”
- **Exotic:** exotic protein source such as venison, bison, wild boar, kangaroo, goat, guinea fowl, quail, pheasant, rabbit, mackerel, whitefish, and/or trout
- **Grain-free:** Does NOT contain corn, wheat, or rice, and instead contains: Quinoa, garbanzo beans/chickpeas, lentils, peas, sweet potato, flaxseed, pinto beans, and/or alfalfa meal. May or may not contain barley and/or oats/oatmeal.

What is the **problem** with feeding BEG diets?

- BEG diets appear to cause increased risk for a heart condition called dilated cardiomyopathy, or **DCM**. “Cardiomyopathy” means there is a problem with the muscle in the walls of the heart, and “dilated” means the heart gets very large. In DCM, the heart muscle gets very thin, and the heart enlarges because the thin walls cannot resist the normal pressure of blood in the heart.
- Certain breeds (Doberman pinscher, Great Dane, Irish Wolfhound, and Cocker Spaniel) are genetically predisposed to developing DCM. However, the first clue that BEG diets were problematic was that other breeds NOT usually expected to develop DCM were being diagnosed more frequently, including Golden retrievers, Labradors, standard poodles, and shepherds.

If they aren't healthy, **why** are BEG diets so prevalent and popular?

- We wish we understood this phenomenon better ourselves! There are likely many factors involved.
- One is the fact that in the US today, pets are considered family members, and we want to feed what we perceive to be the highest-quality diet to our furry family members. Pet food companies capitalize on that impulse, and they use marketing and advertising to make their products seem like the best choice. They use beautiful artwork on their packages, and use heavyweight materials that feel high-end and expensive. They don't make their products widely available, and when something is hard to get, it makes it seem exclusive and special. They use negative talk about other products to make their own product seem better.
- Another factor is likely the surging popularity of special, restrictive diets for people such as keto, low-carb, gluten-free, and occasionally paleo. We hear about the potential

such as keto, low-carb, gluten-free and especially paleo. We hear about the potential health benefits of these diets and we want the same benefits for our pets.

Are there any health conditions in dogs that benefit from a BEG diet?

- **The short answer is, not really.** Some owners may worry about food allergies, but the reality is that while environmental allergies are quite common, less than 2% of allergic dogs have a food allergy. And most of those dogs are allergic to the protein source, NOT the grains commonly found in dog foods.

What is the best food for dogs?

- There are still **numerous** options for safe foods, and **there isn't one single, best diet for every dog.**
- At this time, it is safest to **AVOID** diets that list **peas, lentils, potatoes and/or sweet potatoes** (in any form, such as lentil meal, potato flour, or pea protein) in the first 10 ingredients (listed before vitamins and minerals).
- **Hill's, Royal Canin, Purina, Iams, and Eukanuba** have done the most research about dog and cat nutrition, and have excellent quality control.
- If you prefer not to feed one of these brands, we recommend following the **World Small Animal Veterinary Association guidelines for selecting a pet food.** We are also happy to discuss other options with you!