



THE NATURAL AUTHORITY™

ON GRAIN FREE DIETS

Introduction

Grain Free diets are designed to provide balanced nutrition to dogs with food sensitivities by excluding grains from the diet. Most dietary sensitivities in dogs result when the immune system mistakenly identifies a food protein as a foreign substance and attacks as if it were a harmful pathogen. With repeated exposure, the body incrementally mounts defenses against this “foreign” protein, often resulting in gastrointestinal or dermatological signs. Anaphylaxis, a severe reaction as consequence of food allergy more common in humans, is a rare reaction in pets.

Which foods are dogs most sensitive to?

Food sensitivities can be associated with several ingredients, but are most commonly associated with proteins. Dogs show increased sensitivity to animal-based protein sources over plant-based protein sources, with dogs having the most sensitivity to beef, dairy, wheat, egg, and chicken products. In grain, the presence of a protein called gluten, which is in wheat, barley and rye products, can result in a food sensitivity.

How can a Grain Free diet help dogs with food sensitivities?

Many proteins can cause food sensitivities, and repeated exposure to a protein increases the chances of developing a hypersensitivity. Since it is difficult to isolate the exact protein in a mixed diet that prompts a food sensitivity, novel protein sources and/or limited ingredients can be beneficial for pets with food sensitivities. Novel proteins are proteins not as commonly consumed by dogs. This may be different for each individual animal, depending on their nutritional history (e.g. lamb would be a novel protein to a dog who has routinely been fed chicken). A limited ingredient diet (LID) uses a minimal number of ingredients or ingredient sources. This usually includes a single animal protein and single carbohydrate source. A LID with a minimal variety of proteins will reduce the chances the food contains a potential allergen. Feeding a grain-free dog food that is also a LID with a single, novel animal protein source has great potential to help reduce food sensitivities in dogs.

How can I tell if my dog has a food sensitivity?

Veterinarians are the best resource to consult when trying to determine whether a dog has a food allergy. Many other medical conditions have similar dermatologic and gastrointestinal signs to those associated with food allergies.

An elimination diet is the most commonly used method to confirm food sensitivities in dogs. During an elimination diet, a food with a single, novel protein and single, novel carbohydrate source is fed for a minimum of 8 weeks. Sustained elimination of the aggravating food component from the diet is essential. If signs of the food sensitivity are reduced by the elimination diet, confirmation of the food sensitivity and resolution by the new diet can be achieved by re-feeding the original diet or original protein source to determine if the food sensitivity resumes.

NUTRO® Grain Free Formulas are based on the natural nutrition principles described in this article.



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