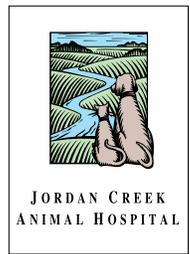




# FALL 2018 Gazette

☞ newsletter for people and their pets



3401 E.P. True Parkway  
West Des Moines, Iowa 50265

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## Potential Link Between Grain Free Diets and Canine Heart Disease

As many of you may have seen in the news, on July 12th, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a warning advising owners about a possible link between grain-free, non-traditional “boutique” or small company diets and a dangerous heart condition called Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM). Considering the recent popularity of grain-free diets for dogs, this has the potential to become a significant health issue.

### Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM)

Canine DCM is disease of the heart muscle that leads to a weakened, enlarged heart. The heart has a harder time pumping effectively as it becomes enlarged, and heart valves start to leak. Congestive heart failure can develop, leading to fluid buildup in the chest and abdomen. Dogs with DCM may show signs of heart failure including decreased energy, cough, difficulty breathing, and episodes of collapse.

Dilated Cardiomyopathy has two known causes: a genetic predisposition within large breed dogs (Newfoundlands, Boxers, Great Danes, Saint Bernards, Doberman Pinschers, and Irish Wolfhounds), or deficient taurine levels in the body. Taurine is an important amino acid that pets get from a well-balanced dog food. Historically, dogs that were found to

have taurine-deficient DCM were usually eating an improperly balanced diet, such as raw or a home-cooked diet that had not been formulated by a veterinary nutritionist. If caught early, those cases of DCM that are not linked to genetics may improve with appropriate dietary modification and veterinary treatment.

### Recent Cases of DCM Seen in Atypical Breeds

Recently, cardiologists began to see DCM in atypical breeds such as Golden and Labrador Retrievers, Miniature Schnauzers, a Shih Tzu, a Whippet, a Bulldog, and mixed breeds that were on “balanced diets”. They began to compare the cases, searching for a common factor that

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# Potential Link Between Grain Free Diets and Canine Heart Disease

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could link them and help provide some answers. The one thing all the affected dogs had in common was their diet. All were eating a grain-free exotic protein, "boutique" diet that contained peas, lentils, other legume seeds, or potatoes as main ingredients. Reports from the cardiology community indicate the dogs consistently ate these foods as their primary source of nutrition anywhere from months to years.

According to the FDA, "It's not yet known how these ingredients are linked to cases of DCM, but high levels of legumes or potatoes appear to be more common in diets labeled as 'grain-free'". Some of the affected dogs had low blood levels of taurine when tested, but others had normal blood taurine levels. Obviously, there is still a lot of information unknown, and the FDA continues to work closely with veterinary cardiologists and nutritionists to better understand the connection. Pet food manufacturers have also been contacted to discuss the reports and further the investigation.

## Grain Free and Pet Food Recommendations

In the past decade the pet food industry has exploded with a variety of "high-end" dog foods claiming human grade ingredients, foods more "natural" for the dog, and grain-free diets full of alternative carbohydrate sources such as potatoes, peas, and lentils often paired with exotic proteins. Along with these diets came a change in pet food marketing, claiming that grains are unhealthy for dogs and cause allergies, and that by-products are void of nutrition and are used as fillers. The truth is the more uncommon ingredients you mix together, the harder the diet becomes to properly balance. The ingredients commonly used in standard dog food such as chicken, beef, grains, and by-products are used because extensive studies have shown over decades that these ingredients are nutritious and safe.

It will be some time before studies are completed and a potential connection between grain-free diets and

DCM is verified. Until a final determination is made, we recommend pet owners avoid diets from "boutique" pet food companies with primary ingredients on the FDA's warning list. If your dog is currently on a grain-free diet and doing well, we are not necessarily advising you to change their diet, rather, be aware of the ongoing studies involving grain-free diets and a possible connection with DCM, and clinical signs that are associated with dilated cardiomyopathy. We do recommend all Royal Canin, Hill's, and Purina Veterinary diets; these undergo large scale rigorous testing, government oversight, and have low recall rate, putting them among the safest for your pets. This includes their veterinary diets that contain the ingredients listed in the FDA's warning (legumes, peas, lentils, potatoes), that are frequently utilized for food allergy trials or dogs with known food allergies.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your dog and their diet, please ask us.



## FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

**This summer marked a huge turning point for Jordan Creek Animal Hospital! We are excited to announce, on July 1st, 2018, Dr. Daniel Whitney, son of Dr. Dan Whitney, has officially become part owner of JCAH! We look forward to all of the new adventures to be had with both father and son, together, as owners!**

# The Scoop on Poop

Annual fecal testing is recommended for all of our pets, but have you ever wondered why? Having a stool sample checked every year is very important, not only for the health of your pet and family, but also for the health of our general public. When you submit a stool sample at our hospital, we look at the sample microscopically for a number of internal parasites that our pets can pick up from their mother, other pets, or the environment, and if infected, can potentially be transferred to other pets and humans. Though some pets will show symptoms, many can carry parasites with no signs of ill health. Below is a list of the most common internal parasites:

**TAPEWORMS:** Most dogs and cats get tapeworms by swallowing a flea infected with the tapeworm larvae or by eating an infected animal. If your pet has tapeworms, you may see small off-white segments crawling near the anus or on the surface of the bowel movement. While the risk of infection with tapeworms in humans is low, it is still prudent to practice good hygiene. Preventing hunting activity by pets and providing good flea prevention will help ensure your pet does not get tapeworms.

**HOOKWORMS:** Puppies and kittens are especially likely to have hookworms. Pets pass hookworm eggs in their stool. Hookworm eggs and larvae can get into the body if a person accidentally eats or has direct contact with contaminated soil. Humans with hookworms can get skin infections and/or intestinal bleeding, inflammation, and abdominal pain. Routine deworming of puppies and kittens, annual fecal exams, and most monthly heartworm preventatives will help prevent hookworm infections.

**ROUNDWORMS:** Pets usually contract roundworms from their mother before birth or from her milk. They can also get roundworms from the environment by consuming roundworm eggs in feces, soil, or a rodent or rabbit with roundworms. You or your children can become infected after accidentally swallowing roundworm eggs present in soil

or other contaminated surfaces. Roundworm infections can cause a variety of symptoms including diarrhea, weakness, and malnutrition in pets. Routine deworming of puppies and kittens, annual fecal exams, and most monthly heartworm preventatives will help prevent roundworm infections.

**WHIPWORMS:** Whipworms are one the most difficult parasites to eradicate in dogs. Like many other intestinal parasites, whipworms can infect anyone who comes into contact with contaminated dog feces, soil, or grass. Like hook and roundworms, infected whipworm eggs may persist in the soil for years. Symptoms of infection include diarrhea, anemia, and loss of appetite. Routine deworming of puppies, annual fecal exams, and some monthly heartworm preventatives will help prevent whipworm infections.

**COCCIDIA:** Coccidia are small, microscopic organisms that infect the small intestine. Your pet can get coccidia by consuming contaminated soil. A coccidia infection causes watery, and sometimes bloody diarrhea. It can be a life-threatening problem to an especially young or small puppy. Humans cannot contract coccidia from a puppy.

**GIARDIA:** The giardia parasite is commonly found in soil, food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with the feces from infected humans or animals. Infection can occur after accidentally swallowing the parasite. Symptoms generally include diarrhea, dehydration, and stomach cramps. Practicing good hygiene and avoiding water consumption from rivers and lakes can help prevent exposure to giardia.

To best protect yourself from getting parasites from pets, thoroughly wash your hands with running water and soap after contact with dogs' saliva, urine, or feces and also after contact with cat feces or cleaning the litter box. If you or your pet do get sick, contact your family physician or veterinarian to discuss the recommended treatment procedure. Also remember, the monthly heartworm preventives that we recommend, administered on a year round basis, contain medications for intestinal deworming in addition to heartworm prevention.





## Monthly Meetings

The doctors and staff at Jordan Creek Animal Hospital think that monthly employee meetings are essential to promoting communication and educational opportunities. Because of this, we will be closed from 1:30-2:30 PM on the following Wednesdays: **October 24, November 14, and December 12.**

### Welcome Nicole!

Nicole was born and raised in Marion, Iowa, however, she has lived many different places throughout the US. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Biology from Texas A&M University in Galveston, Texas. She has previously spent time at Texas A&M Labs, Alaska SeaLife Center, RiceTec Labs, and most recently, EuroFins Scientific Laboratory. Nicole enjoys hiking, kayaking, and spending time with her family. She shares her home with Bentley the Boxer, Queso the Chihuahua, Bane the Husky, and two cats, Laverne and Shirley! A big welcome to Nicole as our newest veterinary assistant!



### Welcome Ashley!

Ashley grew up in Winterset, Iowa on a small farm. She has always been passionate about animals and loves spending time with them. Ashley received her Bachelor's degree in Animal Science from Iowa State University in 2016. She has previously worked at Raccoon River Kennels before coming to JCAH. Ashley enjoys hiking, horseback riding, and going on adventures with her dog, Miah, a 2 year old lab mix! Please help us welcome Ashley as a new JCAH veterinary assistant!

## MEET THE STAFF/our editors for this issue of Pet Gazette



**Dr. Rachel Varley**, originally from Carroll, Iowa, received her bachelor's degree from Wartburg College in 2007. She went on to receive her Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine Degree from Iowa State University in 2011. After graduation, she completed a rotating internship in surgery/internal medicine at a specialty and emergency hospital in Ohio.

She came to Jordan Creek Animal Hospital in 2012.

Dr. Varley and her husband have a daughter, Claire, a son, James, and a Rat Terrier named Paisley. Dr. Varley enjoys being outdoors, spending time with family and friends, and taking pictures.



**Amy King, RVT** grew up in Milford, Iowa near Lake Okoboji. In September 1999, she received her Associate of Applied Sciences Degree in Veterinary Technology from the Medical Institute of Minnesota as well as her Minnesota Certification. She worked at Cedarview Animal Hospital in Apple Valley, Minnesota, where she completed her college internship before moving to the Des Moines area.

She began work at Jordan Creek Animal Hospital and received her Iowa Certification in April 2001.

Amy, husband Rawley, daughter Elizabeth, and sons Ethan and Emmett share their home with two cats, Buzz and Ace, two dogs Ernie and Eastwood, and five rabbits. When she isn't busy at work or spending time with her family and pets, she enjoys biking, camping, and shopping.