

# Grain-free diets are healthier.

## It's a myth

Many pet owners believe that grain-free pet foods are easier to digest, provide pets with better nutrition and are less likely to cause allergies than pet foods containing grain.

## The facts

Properly processed grains are highly digestible.

- While uncooked grains are poorly digested by dogs and cats, properly cooked grains in pet foods are highly digestible.
- Dogs and cats can digest the carbohydrates from grains with an efficiency of greater than 90%.<sup>1,2</sup>

Diets containing grains provide excellent nutrition.<sup>3</sup>

- Grains are carbohydrates, which are an important source of energy.
- Grains also contain fiber, which supports gastrointestinal health and decreases the total fat and calories in a diet.
- Essential fatty acids and other nutrients in grains contribute to a healthy skin and coat.
- Concentrated protein sources from grains, such as corn gluten meal, can be highly digestible sources of many essential amino acids.

Grains are unlikely to cause allergies.

- Less than 1% of dogs are sensitive to grains.
- True food allergies are caused by immune reactions to proteins in the diet.
- Allergies to proteins in grains can occur, but are far less common than allergies to other protein sources, such as beef or dairy.<sup>4</sup>

## Remember

Properly processed grains provide necessary nutrients as part of a nutritionally complete and balanced diet.

1. Carciofi AC, Takakura FS, de-Oliveira LD, et al. Effects of six carbohydrate sources on dog diet digestibility and postprandial glucose and insulin response. *J Anim Physiol Anim Nutr.* 2008;92:326–336.

2. de-Oliveira LD, Carciofi AC, Oliveira MC, et al. Effects of six carbohydrate sources on diet digestibility and postprandial glucose and insulin responses in cats. *J Anim Sci.* 2008;86:2237–2246.

3. Carbohydrates. In: Case LP, Carey DP, Hirakawa DA, eds. *Canine and Feline Nutrition.* St. Louis, MO: Mosby; 1995:17–20.

4. Verlinden A, Hesta M, Millet S, Janssens GP. Food allergy in dogs and cats: a review. *Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr.* 2006;46:259–273.