

Dietary Protein and Kidney Function

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Natura occasionally gets questions about the effect of dietary protein on kidney function. Usually these concerns are related to the previously held belief that high protein intake leads to kidney disease. Although this theory has not been proven in repeated scientific studies^{1,2}, it lingers most likely because protein restriction is part of the treatment for pets already diagnosed with kidney failure. In patients with existing kidney failure, it has been shown that dietary phosphorus restriction, and not protein restriction, is the key nutritional factor for helping to delay progression of disease.³ However, reducing protein can help to reduce some of the associated signs of ill feeling, such as nausea and poor appetite. The level of phosphorus and protein restriction that is typically recommended by veterinarians for patients with kidney failure is lower than the minimum levels set by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) for adult maintenance. Accordingly, all commercial pet foods that meet the AAFCO minimum nutrient requirement are too high in phosphorus for a pet with kidney disease. Because all Natura foods are complete and balanced per AAFCO guidelines, no Natura product would be appropriate for managing patients with kidney disease. In addition, over-the-counter (OTC) pet foods on the market today made and/or distributed by any company are not formulated to meet the specialized needs of a patient with kidney failure. Fortunately for pets with kidney disease, phosphorus-restricted and lower protein therapeutic foods that can help manage the disease are available from veterinarians. Unfortunately, there is no OTC or therapeutic pet food that exists which can prevent the development of kidney disease. If you are concerned that your pet may have kidney disease or need a therapeutic food, please consult with your veterinarian.

As the innovator of the low carbohydrate and grain-free category of dry pet foods, Natura has conducted and funded a variety of studies on feeding high levels of dietary protein, such as those found in many of our EVO® and California Natural® Grain Free pet foods. Many of these studies have included monitoring the kidney health of both healthy adult dogs and cats fed high protein levels long-term. To date these studies have shown no ill effect on kidney function as measured by blood levels of creatinine. Creatinine is the most commonly available non-invasive method to determine kidney function. As kidney function decreases, creatinine increases in the blood as the kidneys are unable to as effectively clear this naturally occurring substance. In a six month long study conducted at Natura's non-invasive and humane Belfield Center, creatinine values of healthy adult dogs fed EVO® remained statistically unchanged.⁴ Similarly, healthy cats in a study conducted at the University of Illinois had stable creatinine levels after four months of feeding a high protein/low carbohydrate diet.⁵ These findings provide scientific support for the safety of high protein foods and are consistent with the many reports of EVO®'s success in dogs and cats since its introduction in late 2004.

If you have additional questions about EVO®, California Natural® or any Natura product line, please contact us at 800-532-7261 or visit us online at naturapet.com.

References

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3. *Am J Vet Res.* 1992;53(12):2264-71.; 4. *J Animal Physiol Anim Nutr.* 2009;93(6):805-6.; 5. *Br J Nutr.* 2009; 102(8):1136-44.

