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Taurine-deficient Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) in Golden Retrievers

In the wake of many Golden Retrievers being diagnosed with taurine-deficient DCM, we have started to collect information to better understand the condition and help the Golden Retriever community. Unfortunately, many owners have identified concerns and proceeded with supplementation or diet change without first obtaining appropriate diagnostic criteria. This approach has led to more confusion and an inability to definitively say whether some dogs have an inherited cardiomyopathy or a nutritionally derived heart disease. This makes a huge difference in the prognosis and outcome for these dogs and their possible continuation in the breeding pool. Please review the following steps regarding evaluation of taurine-deficient DCM. Our group has put this together to help get to the bottom of this issue as fast and as medically appropriate as possible.

1. If you believe your dog is at risk for taurine deficient Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) and wish to have taurine levels tested - please request a whole-blood taurine level be submitted (lithium heparin tube) for analysis. The laboratory that I recommend can be found here: <http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/vmb/labs/aal/>
2. If you believe your dog is showing signs of DCM already - please seek an appointment with a board certified cardiologist to have an echocardiogram and taurine testing obtained simultaneously - do not change foods, do not supplement prior to the appointment.
3. If you receive taurine test results that come back as low - please seek an appointment with a board certified cardiologist to have an echocardiogram performed to determine if your pet needs cardiac medications and the appropriate supplements to be used (DO NOT SUPPLEMENT OR CHANGE FOODS UNTIL YOU HAVE THE CARDIOLOGY EVALUATION COMPLETED). If you live in close to UC Davis, we can arrange research-funded cardiology evaluations for your dog if you contact us via sterngenetics@ucdavis.edu.
4. If you receive cardiologist confirmed DCM results, please take an image of the food bag, ingredient list and lot number. Please also request a copy of the images from the echocardiogram from your cardiologist (ensure that you have full DICOM image copies on a CD). Please complete a full diet history form found at this link (http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/vmth/small_animal/nutrition/forms.cfm). Please email the image of food bag, a 3-generation pedigree, diet history form, copies of the taurine level results and medical record to sterngenetics@ucdavis.edu. A member of our laboratory team will contact you to discuss our thoughts and possibly request additional information, food samples or blood samples for further testing.
5. If you have any questions on how to proceed please email Dr. Stern at sterngenetics@ucdavis.edu.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joshua Stern'.

Joshua A Stern, DVM, PhD, DACVIM

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