

Randomized Controlled Trial of Ultra-Low Fat Diets for Dogs with Protein-Losing Enteropathy

Study Overview

The University of Tennessee Veterinary Medical Center (UT-VMC) and Michigan State University Veterinary Medical Center (MSU-VMC) are conducting a research study comparing two different ultra-low fat, fresh-prepared diets for dogs diagnosed with protein-losing enteropathy (PLE). Though both diets are considered suitable for dogs with PLE, this clinical trial aims to determine if a common protein source (chicken) versus a novel protein source (cod) leads to better outcomes in affected dogs.

Study Purpose

This trial will evaluate whether an ultra-low fat fresh-prepared diet with common protein (chicken) or novel protein (cod) leads to better outcomes in dogs with PLE due to intestinal lymphangiectasia (IL). The information gathered will help veterinarians make more informed dietary recommendations and will help future dogs with PLE receive improved treatment recommendations.

Eligibility

In order for dogs to be eligible for the trial, they need to have:

- CCECAI score ≥ 5
- Age > 1 year
- Clinical signs consistent with PLE for at least 2 weeks
- Albumin < 2.0 g/dl with previous exclusion of other major causes of hypoalbuminemia
- Histologic evidence of mild to moderate inflammatory enteritis in the presence of intestinal lymphangiectasia

Dogs with previous exposure to whitefish or cod, concurrent pruritus, or those who have been on ultra-low fat diets within the past 30 days will not be eligible. **Note: Previous exposure to chicken is NOT exclusionary.**

Treatment Protocol

Upon enrollment, eligible dogs will:

- Be randomly assigned to one of two therapeutic ultra-low fat fresh-prepared diets (chicken or cod)
- Receive standard medications for PLE treatment (prednisone/prednisolone, clopidogrel, and cobalamin)
- Return for follow-up examinations and bloodwork to monitor their progress at days 14, 28, 56, and 84

If a dog's condition does not improve satisfactorily by day 14 or 28 on the chicken diet, they will be switched to the cod diet. If no improvement is seen after this switch, dogs will be removed from the trial and alternative treatment options will be provided.

Cost

Caretakers who elect to have their dogs participate in the trial will receive:

- All study diets provided at no cost for the duration of the study (12 weeks)
- All follow-up examination fees and blood testing covered
- Fecal calprotectin and dysbiosis index testing at no cost

Clients will be responsible for:

- Initial diagnostic work-up costs
- Cost of prescribed medications (prednisone/prednisolone, clopidogrel, and cobalamin)

Note: Enrollment in this study is entirely voluntary. Dogs will receive standard of care regardless of whether they participate in the study. Dogs may be withdrawn from the study at any time without penalty.

This study is being conducted at:

- University of Tennessee Veterinary Medical Center (UT-VMC)
- Michigan State University Veterinary Medical Center (MSU-VMC)
- With collaboration from Texas A&M University Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital (TAMU-VMC)

Principal Investigators:

- Dr. Sara Jablonski (MSU-VMC)
- Dr. Katie Tolbert (TAMU-VMC)
- Dr. Sarah Schmid (UT-VMC)
- Dr. Angela Rollins (UT-VMC)
- Dr. Vincent Michels (Just Food For Dogs)
- Dr. Chris Margrey (Just Food For Dogs)