

## FACT SHEET

### Gluten Free

Wheat gluten is a very common allergen and when people request a gluten-free diet, they really mean a diet free from wheat-gluten. Wheat has a particularly sensitive protein structure, which is readily changed by processing, and when this happens, the body does not recognise the changed wheat as a natural substance and reacts against it. Moreover, wheat is not a natural grain for dogs anyway, so few tolerate it well especially if it is fed regularly.

All cereals contain gluten, but few others cause the same adverse reactions as wheat gluten. Rice is almost totally non-allergenic. Maize can cause adverse reaction in some animals, as can barley, and occasionally oats. Soya is a vegetable protein, now widely used in pet food, and is another poorly tolerated substance. We believe that this is because it is not a product that our pets would normally ingest in their natural state, and hence they have no inherent tolerance to its protein.

We need to understand that our immune systems and those of our pets are the body's defence against foreign protein invaders, normally bacteria and viruses. In broad terms any protein molecule that does not belong to the body can cause a reaction from this finely tuned defence mechanism. To permit survival, the immune system develops tolerance to natural protein sources found in natural food products, but this tolerance has developed over many hundreds of years of evolution.

Food processing and the introduction of unnatural protein sources are a recent occurrence, and the last 30 years has seen the birth of food intolerance and a whole host of allergy related disorders. To learn more about food allergy/intolerance and the function of the immune system see our fact sheet on Food Allergy/Intolerance.

In the past, dog biscuits were made by a traditional process of kneading the dough. This had the result of breaking down the chains of gluten. With this traditional method, we never had the number of dogs suffering from gluten allergies than we see today. In modern times, the process has been replaced by the extruder, providing higher and cheaper output manufacturing. However, the extruder does not produce the mechanical kneading of the dough and is less likely to break down the chains of gluten. We believe that this is another example of modern manufacturing processes having an effect on the health of our pets.

#### How can Naturediet help?

All Naturediet products are free from wheat gluten, soya, barley, and maize. Rice is the only grain addition.

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*We care what goes into our food, because you care what goes into your pet*