

Could Keto Help Canine Malignancy, Seizures and Obesity?

While the traditional veterinary community may not be on board with using ketogenic feeding plans for tumors, epilepsy, and obesity in dogs, that's not stopping some individuals from spreading the word of the near-miraculous reports coming from owners using keto with their pets.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Today's Pet Game Changer is Mike Battaglia, founder of KetoPoweredK9.com and the Ketogenic Dog Group Facebook page
- Mike's inspiration to learn about ketogenic diets and how to prepare them is his dog Emie, who was diagnosed with mast cell cancer in 2017
- Thanks to his hard work and dedication, Mike's dog continues to thrive, and a growing group of pet parents are learning about healing disease and improving quality of life through nutrition

My guest today is Mike Battaglia, who was nominated for a Game Changer award by Debbie D. Mike is the founder of KetoPoweredK9.com, a website that provides a wealth of information on raw ketogenic diets for dogs with cancer, as well as a Facebook page where anxious, hopeful pet parents have formed a community.

Four-Year-Old Dog Develops Cancer

I asked Mike to tell us the story behind his passion for dog nutrition and specifically, ketogenic diets for dogs with cancer.

"There's definitely a story behind that," Mike replies. "It's a long story, so I'll try to condense it. We adopted our dog, Emie from a local rescue group back in 2012 when she was just eight weeks old. Unfortunately, at around the age of four, she developed a small lump on the top side of her back, and right before she turned five in 2017, the lump was diagnosed as a mast cell tumor (MCT).

As many pet parents are unfortunately aware, when you get that phone call that your dog has cancer, your heart sinks. And then you immediately feel an urgency to do something to try to help your dog. You don't want to just wait around for your next scheduled veterinary appointment. So, like so many others before me, I hopped online and started doing research.

*I started learning about ketogenic diets and the work the **KetoPet Sanctuary** in Texas was doing at the time. I realized pretty quickly that formulating a ketogenic diet for my dog was pretty complex. It's one of the reasons I started the Ketogenic Dog Group on Facebook.*

I wanted to help build a community of people with dogs with cancer who could network together, console one another, and learn about how and why keto diets work."

Coincidentally, around the time Emie's cancer was diagnosed Mike had also just watched the Pet Fooled documentary about the ultraprocessed pet food industry, and as he did his research, more pieces of the puzzle fell into place.

I was curious as to whether Mike had even heard the term "ketogenic diet" or "ketosis" before his dog got sick, and he explained that around the same time, a couple he knew had an infant not even out of the hospital yet who was having seizures. It turns out the baby had GLUT1 deficiency, in which glucose isn't transported to the brain, resulting has seizures.

There's currently no therapy or cure for GLUT1 deficiency. As Mike learned, the only way to manage it is through a ketogenic diet, which sparked his interest in researching the topic.

Keto Diets for Canine Cancer, Seizures, and Even Weight Loss

Needless to say, Mike's learning curve at this point was "vertical," and his first hurdle was trying to figure out how to transition Emie from an ultraprocessed "premium" kibble to an entirely unprocessed, carb-free diet, while feeling overwhelmed and a bit panicky.

"It was definitely a lot to take in," says Mike. "And at the same time, I'm hearing from people telling me 'My God, you can't feed a dog with cancer raw meat! You're going to kill her!' Or 'You can't feed that much fat, you'll cause pancreatitis!' How do you make sense of who's right and who's wrong?"

Unfortunately, the veterinary community isn't onboard with ketogenic diets for cancer or epilepsy in dogs. Many haven't even heard of them; others aren't interested in learning about them. Thankfully, dog owners have Mike's website and Facebook group to fall back on, where discussions primarily center around keto diets for cancer, epilepsy, and even weight loss for too-heavy dogs.

"My dog lost 17 pounds on a ketogenic diet," Mike explains. "No vet had ever told me about the Body Condition Score (BCS) chart that shows how dogs typically look when they're underweight, at a good weight, and overweight or obese. To my eyes, Emie looked great. She was active and did everything with me.

I think through the simple act of getting the information out there on the website and Facebook page, we got a little snowball rolling downhill effect going and people started learning about other options and the potential the diets can hold for their dogs."

Nutritional Interventions Are a Fast-Acting Therapy

I asked Mike what he loves most about the work he's doing.

*"I love, first and foremost, helping dogs," he replies. "But I also love helping people. When your dog is diagnosed with cancer or has **seizures**, there's a lot of emotional baggage that comes along with that.*

I enjoy helping people get the information they need and figure out what needs to be done and how to do it, so they can see that it's feasible. If they can cook a meal in their kitchen for themselves following a recipe, they can do the same for their dog. People just need guidance."

Mike is concerned that all the misguided information floating around dissuades people from trying a keto diet to help their dog. He feels it will be small groups like the Facebook Ketogenic Dog Group that get the word out and bring light to the subject.

"It's great when people get in touch and say things like, 'Not only have I learned through all of this how important nutrition is for my animal, but this has been a really eye-opening experience for me to focus on my own health and how I'm eating,'" says Mike. "After all, the diseases and ailments we see in our dogs these days parallel what's going on with humans."

I totally agree with Mike. Nutritional interventions typically trigger fast positive change, and it can be really inspiring to see pet parents with health challenges begin to contemplate using nutrition to improve their own health.

"It's true that, as you said, a dog's recovery can be quick with a nutritional intervention," Mike agrees. "Dogs with cancer who were eating a high carb kibble diet often have owners who are absolutely amazed at the turnaround. They say things like, 'Oh my God, my dog has never been this energetic or shown this much improvement."

It's kind of unfortunate that this knowledge is coming at a time when the dog has already been diagnosed with cancer, but it's still powerful to be able to show people how much nutrition really matters in our animals."

One of the most powerful things for me in making the Dog Cancer Series documentary was when one of our clients said their dog had never been so healthy, even though he was dying of metastatic cancer everywhere in his body. We could slow the cancer down, but we weren't going to cure the dog, yet he was the healthiest he'd ever been while dealing with end stage metastatic cancer.

When you see animals at a perfect lean body weight, with a shiny coat and lots of energy, but also with the worst diagnosis possible all in one body, you understand the power of nutrition.

It's Never Too Late to Try

Mike adds that it's important for people to know that it's never too late to at least try with a pet with cancer.

"I've seen a 15-year-old dog with cancer who regained an amazing quality of life," he says. "He ultimately still passed away from the cancer, but the last year or year and a half of that dog's life, he ate a ketogenic diet and went swimming with his human."

The owner was swimming between two and three miles a day the whole time, and this is a 15-year-old dog! It's incredible. The dog lived a great life. It's not always about trying to beat or cure the cancer. Often, it's about giving the dog the best quality of life while living with the disease."

Finally, I asked Mike what one thing he would tell the world if he had the chance.

"None of us should be too hard on ourselves for wishing we knew better or did better," he replies. "I think there's not even one of us that doesn't have some sort of regret, or wish we'd done things differently, but at the end of the day, we can only continue to learn more, and implement what we learn from this point forward in our dogs' lives.

We need to be proud of what we have done and what we're trying to do with all our animals."

Mike adds that the whole "feeding raw meat to a dog with cancer" taboo is a big point of contention with many people who find their way into his group.

"I think we do a pretty good job informing them otherwise, but unfortunately, I don't think the vet industry will ever change the advice they give when it comes to raw in those situations. What I know is that in five years of doing this, with hundreds of dogs, we've never had one reported case that anyone became sick eating raw meat while going through their bout with cancer."

If you'd like to learn more about ketogenic diets for pets, you can visit Mike's site at [**KetoPoweredK9**](#), as well as join his [**Ketogenic Dog Group**](#) Facebook page.
