

# RAW DIET FACTS

*Like all decisions concerning your pets health, the perceived benefits of feeding a raw food diet to your pet should be weighed against the possible risks. It is important that your decision is based on scientific evidence and current knowledge.*

## **Do Raw Food Diets Meet The Nutritional Requirements For My Pet?**

There is no scientific analysis or data to show that these diets are nutritionally complete and adequate for pets. There is only one published study <sup>(1)</sup> that has examined the nutritional adequacy of raw food diets, and it found significant inadequacies and imbalances. The most important of these is likely an altered calcium to phosphorus ratio, which can have devastating effects on bone development, especially in growing pets. There are no published studies that support the nutritional adequacy of these diets.

## **Is There A Benefit To Feeding a Raw Food Diet?**

There are no scientific studies to support the claim of multiple health benefits by feeding this diet. There are many internet “articles” and testimonial reports from raw food producers touting the benefits of raw food; but unlike scientific publications, these pieces are merely opinions and are not scientifically validated.

## **Are There Risks When Feeding a Raw Food Diet?**

There is mounting evidence that these diets may pose health concerns to pets, and to the people around them. A large-scale review article <sup>(2)</sup> examined reports of the presence of potentially disease causing bacteria in raw food diets. Bacteria such as Salmonella, Campylobacter, E. coli O157:H7 (the cause of “hamburger disease” in humans), Yersinia enterocolitica, Listeria, Clostridium perfringens, Clostridium botulinum, Staphylococcus aureus, and Bacillus cereus were found to be present in raw dog food. All of these bacteria have the potential to cause disease in dogs as well as humans. Several reports have confirmed the presence of Salmonella in home prepared raw food <sup>(3)</sup>, as well as in commercially sold raw food diets <sup>(4,5,6)</sup>.

## **Are Cats Susceptible To The Same Risks?**

YES. There are cases where cats that were fed a home-prepared beef based raw food diet died of an intestinal disease and blood poisoning caused by bacteria. The bacteria Salmonella Newport were found in multiple organs within the cat as well as in the raw food that the cats were eating <sup>(7)</sup>.

## **Are There Risks To My Family and Those Spending Time With My Pets?**

Dogs that eat raw food diets have been proven to shed Salmonella bacteria in their stool <sup>(3,8)</sup> where it could potentially infect humans or other dogs. Alarming new reports have shown that the Salmonella isolated from the raw diets, and from the stool of dogs fed these diets, have developed a resistance to antibiotics that have successfully killed the bacteria in the past. These dogs also contaminate their home and the surrounding environment with Salmonella <sup>(10)</sup>. Regular cleaning of food bowls and the dog’s environment are not sufficient to eliminate the bacteria. Research has shown that routine cleaning of dog bowls may not adequately kill the Salmonella that is present <sup>(7)</sup>. After putting the dog food bowl through a cycle in a residential dishwasher or after soaking the bowl in a 10% bleach solution for five minutes, Salmonella could still be cultured from at least 67% of the bowls. Health problems in pets ingesting raw foods have been documented, including the death of pets due to septicemia (blood poisoning) from Salmonella acquired from raw pet food <sup>(7)</sup>.

### **What is the risk of human infection?**

Although all people are susceptible to infections from the bacteria documented to be present in raw pet foods, there is a higher risk of human infections for people with compromised immune function or very young children that could come into direct contact with the raw food or with the feces from a pet consuming a raw food diet.

### **Are The Risks The Same For Both HomeMade and Commercially Available Raw Food Diets?**

YES. Both home-made and commercially available raw food diets have been documented to contain high levels of bacteria (Salmonella, E. coli, Campylobacter) that have the potential to cause serious disease in the pets eating the diet or the people in contact with the pet. Though freezing (as occurs in commercial raw foods) kills some of the bacteria, it does not kill all the potentially harmful bacteria. Should you suspect that your pet has been exposed to any of these risks, contact your veterinarian.

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