



Fido Files: The Benefits of Raw Food

As our pets are affected more and more by diet related health concerns like compromised immunity, diabetes, allergies, kidney and bladder problems, and digestive issues, more people are considering raw food as a healthier option for their pets. Although raw food was once seen as a HUGE undertaking of pureeing veggies, grinding bones, etc, with the introduction of commercial raw foods feeding raw has never been easier. Just thaw- to- bowl!

Although raw food is still controversial in North America it is commonplace in many other countries around the world. In fact, finding kibble (dry dog food) outside of North America can be somewhat difficult. Unfortunately, we are now seeing the ill effects of what our fast/refined food society is doing to both our people and our pets.

What is Raw Food (aka B.A.R.F)?

A balanced raw food diet consists (basically) of muscle meat, organ meat, bone, and sometimes pulverized raw veggies. Raw food needs to make up the components of a whole animal as it would be consumed by a dog or cat - it is not simply ground beef from the grocery store.

What about the bacteria?

The pet food recall in 2007 has shown us that even cooked foods may contain salmonella. Rawhide treats are one of the worst offenders! What we need to realize is that bacteria are everywhere! We would never stop feeding meat products to our families out of concern of making our kids sick-we are just careful. Handling raw food for our pets is no different. Treat it like your own meat.

Remember to follow safe handling and thawing procedures. Clean up fecal matter (like you would anyway because ALL fecal matter contains bacteria), and wash dishes (even kibble fed dogs should have clean bowls).

What if my Vet does not Support Raw?

Although acceptance is growing (even Oprah had a show about it!), not all veterinarians are supportive of feeding raw food. The most common reason we hear are concerns over bacteria. It can be true that a severely immune compromised animal may suffer complications when ingesting bacteria (from anywhere: the river, the garbage, fecal matter, etc) most THRIVE on the diet. Not just SURVIVE but THRIVE. We see the results everyday and often times with animals that have not been able to find relief other ways.

Unfortunately, our university veterinary programs have not put much emphasis on diet. Luckily, many vets that are taking their education into their own hands and learning more about how important the role that diet plays in the vitality of our pets. There are now plenty of vets in Calgary that FULLY support a raw food diet because



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they have seen the benefits. So, if your vet does not support your choice to feed raw, you should have no problem finding one that does.

What should I expect to see when feeding raw?

The most common comment I hear is LESS POOP! Sure, that's a great side benefit, but what that says is that our pets are using and absorbing more of their food and less of it is in your backyard or litter box. (Did I mention the litter box doesn't smell nearly as bad?)

Raw food is also much easier and faster to digest than kibble, and that means that dogs with gas, diarrhea and other digestive upset (including bad breath which frequently stems from unhealthy digestion) may no longer experience these problems. Raw fed cats, dogs and ferrets have defined muscle tone and weight problems often resolve. Doggie odour disappears, less tartar and plaque, less or no ear infections, a new healthy energy, positive behavioural changes, less shedding, less severe allergic reactions, epileptic seizures can decrease, and the list goes on!

Another side benefit for raw feeding is that pet food recalls in the past have most frequently been due to mouldy and toxic grains (egs. corn gluten, wheat gluten, rice protein, etc) - very seldom (if ever) have they been due to meat - cooked or raw. Most raw food diets are locally produced and the animals are naturally fed which is also a bonus.

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The information in this article should in no way replace veterinary care from a qualified holistic veterinarian.