

As fresh as



it gets...

More and more people are discovering the amazing health benefits of feeding their pets a raw diet.

BY CELESTE YARNALL, PHD

Many people balk when they first think about feeding raw meat to their dogs and cats. Maybe you're one of them. But when you consider the significant health benefits a raw diet can offer your animal, and learn that many of the fears surrounding raw meat are exaggerated, you may change your mind.

Hint

Find a meat supplier you can trust and stick with them. Support local farms whenever possible.

Why feed raw?

Between 1932 and 1942, Dr. Francis M. Pottenger, Jr. conducted a feeding experiment to determine the effects, over several generations, of different diets on cats. When a group of cats was fed a diet of $\frac{2}{3}$ raw meat, $\frac{1}{3}$ raw milk, and cod liver oil, generation after generation enjoyed incredible health. No degenerative changes were noted. There was very little shedding. Gum inflammation was seldom seen. All internal organs were fully developed and functioned normally. The cats proved to be resistant to infections, fleas, parasites, and showed no signs of allergies. They were gregarious, friendly, and had predictable behavior. Miscarriages were rare, and mothers delivered and nursed without difficulty.

Isn't raw meat risky?

We've all heard that raw meat is dangerous, but carnivores have been eating their prey raw for 40 million years with no ill effects. I've been feeding my own version of a raw meat diet to my animals for 15 years and have raised ten generations of super healthy Tonkinese cats.

- One reason raw meat doesn't make carnivores sick is because their digestive tracts are much shorter than ours and food moves through their systems quickly. In addition, their stomach acids destroy most unfriendly bacteria.

- Buy clean meat. It should be pasture-raised or free range, if possible. (For sources of pasture-raised meat, visit the Weston A. Price Foundation's website at www.westonaprice.org.) If there is nothing available in your area, regular meats from the grocery store are still far better than processed commercial pet foods. Always use USDA meats and poultry graded for human consumption.

- If you're still in doubt, you can pre-treat raw meat using grapefruit seed extract (GSE), which is a well-researched antimicrobial agent (see recipe for details). I have always used and trusted GSE as a pre-treatment for raw meat and have not had any problems.

- Finally, just as you would when preparing and handling meat for your human family, be sure to thoroughly clean your hands, sink, countertops and utensils afterwards.

Building a recipe

When creating my raw recipe, I used the prey animal as a model. In the wild, dogs and cats eat the whole animal, including feathers, fur, bones, stomach contents, etc. To rebuild this kind of meal, we need approximately:

- 80% meat (muscle)
- 10% glands and organs (viscera)
- 10% edible bones (ground bone meal also be used)

We started seeing degenerative health conditions in dogs and cats when commercial pet food companies became mainstream in the 1960s.

As a vitamin/mineral-packed substitute for feathers/fur/stomach content, we can use a few raw veggies prepared in a food processor (I use zucchini). Vegetables provide soluble fiber, which prevents constipation. In the wild, dogs and cats obtain some vegetable matter by nibbling on wild grasses. This is usually done to purge their systems. If you prefer not to use raw veggies, try growing organic wheat grass in pots or flats.

Many people feed their pets chunks of raw meat. This is fine, but I personally prefer ground meat and chunks of organ meat. I find that my supplements (which contain bone meal) mix



Quick and Easy Raw Food Recipe for Dogs and Cats

Ingredients:

- 1 pound raw ground or minced/chopped chicken, turkey, lamb, or beef (not too lean; raw fat is great.)
- 1 ounce cut or sliced liver, heart, kidney, or gizzard.
- Pretreat raw meat (and bones, if used) in 8 ounces of purified water to which 4 drops of grapefruit seed extract (GSE) have been dissolved. (Do not use straight GSE internally or topically.) Marinate for 45 minutes in the fridge, then drain off excess water.
- 2 level tablespoons of feline or canine vitamin/mineral powder, which includes bone meal (if bones are used on a regular basis, reduce to 1½ teaspoons), super greens, gland and organ powder, lecithin, and additional nutrients.
- 1 dash Kyolic aged liquid garlic.
- 1 to 2 tablespoons of a feline or canine essential fatty acid (EFA) blend, which includes olive oil, borage oil, salmon oil, and vitamin E oil.

Instructions:

Combine all the above, and at feeding time, top-dress with a high quality digestive enzyme. I prefer enzymes formulated specifically for each species, as both dogs and cats have their own unique requirements.

While cats need taurine, it is not necessary to supplement with it when feeding a raw diet. Raw meat, especially heart, is high in taurine; it's only when meat is cooked that this nutrient is destroyed and must be added back in.

beautifully with ground meat, yet my animals still have the excitement of organ chunks to chew on. I feed a small amount of organ meat daily (every prey animal comes with a full set of organs and glands). My cats especially love lamb liver and kidneys and whole chicken hearts. Medium and large-sized dogs relish whole turkey hearts.

A bone to pick

Bones or ground bone meal are vital for calcium. Raw whole bones are also a great way to help keep your animal's teeth clean. Raw chicken necks can be cut to size for cats and small dogs, and turkey necks and wings left whole for medium to large dogs. Large and giant breed dogs enjoy meaty beef knucklebones. Rock Cornish game hens can be quartered for cats and small dogs already accustomed to eating raw meat and bones. I recommend raw bones only on a full stomach, as this is when they are eaten in the wild.

Hint

Healthy animals love to try new foods. My barometer in gauging the health of dogs and cats new to raw food is to see how quickly they take to it. The more difficult the transition, the more they really need to make the change. Finicky eaters are usually exhibiting subtle signs of underlying illness.

When first introducing your dog or cat to raw bones, allow him to have one for just ten to 15 minutes every few days and observe digestive function. As he adapts, you can let him have it for longer periods. Initially, please supervise bone gnawing. Cats and dogs are designed to crush, shred, and tear their prey. They do not chew their food, as their jaws are not designed to masticate. They swallow most food whole and let their stomach acids do the work. For this reason, never give your animal cooked bones – they splinter easily and can cause choking or injury.

A time-saving tip

Feeding a raw diet doesn't have to be time-consuming or inconvenient. One of the easiest ways to do it is to make up big batches and freeze it in serving-sized portions. You can make enough to last several weeks if you wish. Some experts feel that freezing the meat for at least 72 hours also kills most harmful bacteria. Defrost the meat in the fridge; store in a tightly-covered glass Pyrex bowl and keep for no more than three days. You can refreeze the meat once after defrosting it.

Feeding guidelines

Dogs: Base feeding requirements on breed, weight, and activity levels. Giving a dog approximately 2% of his total body weight is a good rule of thumb. For example, a 50-pound dog can eat approximately 1 to 1 1/2 pounds of the recipe per day, divided into two servings.


Hint

It's wise to consult with a holistic vet when changing your animal's diet, especially if his health is compromised.

If his digestive system is sensitive to dietary changes, start with small amounts of raw food and increase slowly. Always have fresh, purified water available.

Cats: Feed adults two heaping tablespoons morning and evening on a flat plate (they don't like their whiskers

touching the sides of a bowl). Kittens can eat approximately one heaping tablespoon several times per day.

You do have to take care when preparing and handling a raw meat diet, but in my opinion you're putting your animal's health at far greater risk by feeding him a processed commercial pet food. A raw diet is much more wholesome and natural. And if you include love in the recipe, you'll be well on the way to providing optimum health for your dog or cat! 



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