

HOT TOPIC

Raw food diets



In focus

Raw food diets are popular with pet owners but the nutritional benefits are unproven, and most are unaware of the health risks that raw food can pose to pets — and people.¹

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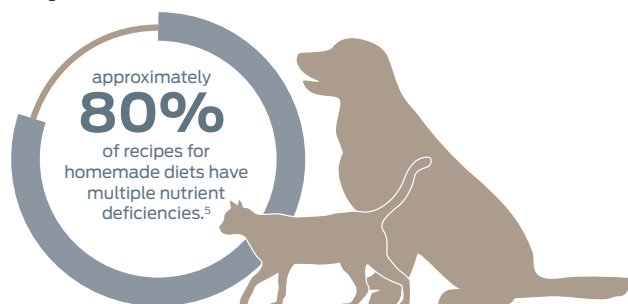
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What are the nutritional benefits of feeding raw diets?

The idea that raw food diets mimic foods eaten by wolves or wild cats appeals to many pet owners. However, raw food diets may not be optimal for domestic dogs and cats living long, healthy lives in a home environment.²

Properly formulated raw diets may be nutritionally appropriate, but study after study shows that homemade diets often have nutrient deficiencies³⁻⁶ that can lead to health problems such as:

- Skeletal and developmental defects in puppies.⁷
- Taurine deficiency in heart muscle in 70% of kittens on raw rabbit diets.⁸
- Hyperthyroidism in dogs fed diets that included raw beef gullet.⁹



Raw meats are highly digestible, which often results in good stool quality. However, when pet foods are cooked at appropriate temperatures, the digestibility of proteins and grains can be increased —and pose fewer health risks.^{8,10,11}

My pet looks healthy, why do you emphasize the risks of raw diets?

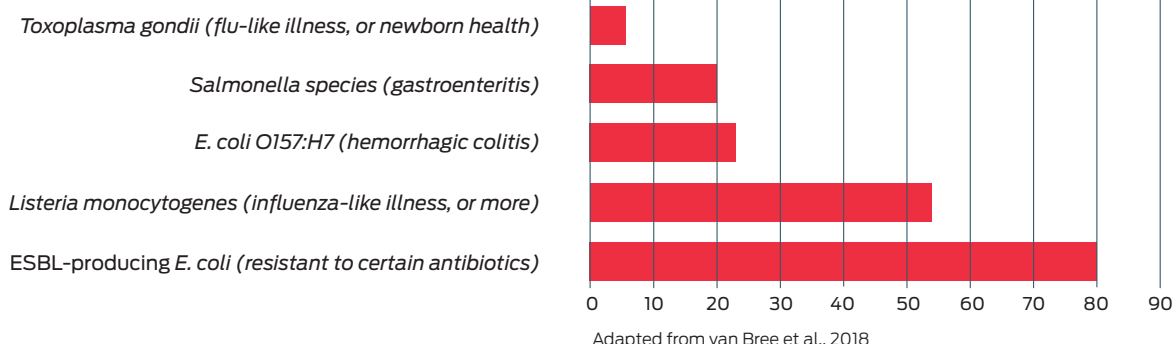
Studies show that the risks of feeding raw diets are often seriously underestimated.¹²

Bacterial contamination is more often linked with raw meat based diets than with heat-treated foods,¹³⁻¹⁵ and this is a proven risk factor for pets to pass pathogens into the environment via feces.¹⁶⁻¹⁸ These environmental pathogens are considered even greater risks for young children, elderly or immunocompromised people.¹⁶⁻¹⁸

Medical reports of pets sickened by these bacteria refute the idea that dogs and cats are naturally adapted to the bacteria in raw diets.¹⁸⁻²⁰ These diets can change a pet's gut microbiome in ways similar to GI diseases.²¹

Although one study suggested that chewing bones helped remove pets' dental plaque,²² many more studies found that when bones are included in raw diets pets are at greater risk for broken teeth, choking or a perforated intestinal tract that could lead to fatal complications.²³⁻²⁶

% Zoonotic pathogens found in 35 raw meat based diets



Adapted from van Bree et al., 2018

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