

TOP TEN MYTHS ABOUT RAW MEAT DIETS

MYTH 1: “Their benefits are proven.”

FACT No scientific studies have shown benefits of raw diets. Their appeal is based on word of mouth, testimonials and perceived benefits. For example, raw food diets may result in a shiny coat and small stools because they are generally high in fat and digestibility. However, these same properties can be achieved with commercial cooked diets without the risks of raw meat diets.

MYTH 2: “This is what animals eat in the wild.”

FACT Wolves in the wild do eat raw meat (in addition to berries, plants, etc). However, the average lifespan for a wolf in the wild is only a few years. Therefore, what is nutritionally “optimal” for a wolf is not optimal for our pets that we hope will live long and healthy lives.

MYTH 3: “Dogs and cats can’t get infections from Salmonella or other bacteria in raw meat diets.”

FACT Dogs and cats can become infected with *Salmonella*, *Clostridium*, *Campylobacter* and other bacteria found in raw meat diets, just as people can (especially young, old or immunosuppressed individuals).

MYTH 4: “Raw food diet ingredients are human grade.”

FACT Even meats purchased at the best of stores for people can contain harmful bacteria, so purchasing “human grade” meat does not protect against the health risks of uncooked meats (would you eat raw ground beef?). It is also important to keep in mind that the term “human grade” has no legal definition for pet food.

MYTH 5: “Freezing raw diets kills bacteria.”

FACT Most of the bacteria found in raw meat diets can easily survive freezing (and freeze-drying).

MYTH 6: “As long as bones are raw, they’re safe.”

FACT Bones, whether raw or cooked, can fracture dogs’ and cats’ teeth. Bone also can block or tear the esophagus, stomach or intestine.

MYTH 7: “Cooking destroys enzymes needed for digestion.”

FACT All the enzymes that dogs and cats (and people) need for digestion are already in the gastrointestinal tract. Therefore, additional enzymes from food are not required for digestion.

MYTH 8: “Raw diets do not contain grains, because grains are added to pet foods only as fillers.”

FACT Corn, oats, rice, barley and other grains are healthy ingredients that contain protein, vitamins and minerals; they are not added as fillers and are unlikely to cause allergies. Although meat is an important component of diets for dogs and cats, grains can be part of a high-quality, nutritionally balanced diet.

MYTH 9: “Most commercial pet foods contain harmful ingredients such as by-products.”

FACT By-products are the animal parts that Americans don’t typically eat, such as livers, kidneys or lungs. There are specific definitions for what by-products can and cannot include. For example, by-products must be the clean parts of slaughtered animals and cannot include feathers, hair, horns, teeth and hooves. Basically, by-products are organs and meats other than animal muscle. Note that some pet foods may actually list these ingredients (e.g., duck liver, beef lung) but these are really just “by-products.” Most commercial and many home-prepared raw diets also contain by-products.

MYTH 10: “If bones or chicken necks are added to raw meat diets, they’re nutritionally balanced.”

FACT Most homemade (and even some commercial) raw meat diets are extremely deficient in calcium and a variety of other nutrients, even if chicken necks, bones or egg shells are added. This can be disastrous in any animal but especially in young, growing pets and can result in fractured bones.

