

Grand Adventures Ranch

Stay, Learn, Play!



Introduction to Feeding Pets a Raw Foods Diet

Kay Aubrey-Chimene, RMT
Bio-Nutritional Therapist

Benefits of a Properly Balanced Raw Diet:

- ◆ Increased resistance to degenerative diseases - e.g. arthritis
- ◆ Naturally clean teeth - no need for toothbrushes, de-scaling jobs, or gum disease.
- ◆ Longer chewing time for raw meaty bones gives more time to stimulate digestive acids.
- ◆ Smaller, firmer stools which turn chalky after a couple of days.
- ◆ Calmer more centered temperaments.
- ◆ Ripping and chewing involved in eating raw meaty bones develops the jaw, neck, and shoulder muscles of the animal. Commercial dog foods do not assist in this important muscle development.
- ◆ Better weight control.
- ◆ Longer life span.
- ◆ Easier pregnancy and whelping.
- ◆ Better weight and survival figures in newborns.
- ◆ More appropriate growth rates. Quick growth spurts are avoided.
- ◆ Proper in-uterine nutrition yields reduced rates of hip displasia and other developmental problems.

"Biologists have yet to discover any wild carnivore that cooks its food"
- Kymthy R. Schultze, A.H.I.

Feeding a Raw (Or Partially Raw) Diet

I am a vocal advocate for feeding animals what they would naturally eat in the wild. Horses did not (and should not) consume animal fats and predators such as dogs and cats need the live enzyme activities of raw meats and vegetables. My goal is to make it easy and safe to feed our animal partners diets designed to mimic those they ate in nature.

Knowledgeable professionals (veterinarians, breeders, trainers, etc.) have published excellent books on better diets for animals. I have included links below to many websites and discussion lists for those looking to find the method that works best for them. Our stand on natural diets is the K.I.S.S. approach - Keep It Simple Stupid! Most of the home cooked and raw diet recipes require a huge investment in time and money in an attempt to balance each meal and every necessary nutritional ingredient. Most of this is done to ensure that no nutritional holes exist in the animal's diet. This often results in actually causing imbalances.

Instead of adding a wide array of supplements to each meal, (i.e. Ester C, Flax Seed Oil, Bone Meal, etc.) I recommend adding Dynamite's Showdown or Liquid Purrrformance to the basic raw feeding guidelines. Showdown and Purrrformance are the finest, human-grade broad-spectrum vitamin-mineral supplements available for dogs and cats. As all of the minerals are in an organic form that prevents the imbalances that can occur when feeding any diet - especially raw. These supplements also provide the essential fatty acids and amino acid profiles necessary to keep the body healthy.

For the occasional troubles and tribulations of changing any diet, even a raw diet, always have a good probiotic such as "Dyna Pro" on hand. Probiotics are invaluable in eliminating diarrhea, flatulence and appetite problems when the digestive tract is under any stress. They are a food for the beneficial gut flora and can reestablish a healthy digestive tract very quickly.

Many purists will tell you to NEVER add raw to a commercial kibble. I don't agree. Yes, adding the live enzyme activity of raw foods to a lower quality, chemically preserved food will most often result in loose stools or diarrhea. However, when fed in addition to an ultra-premium kibble or for alternative meals raw foods can add a needed benefit to even the finest packaged dog food.

Feeding a completely raw diet is not a lifestyle that everyone is ready to accept. So my goal is to find the best solution for all situations.

Imagine Your Pet's Diet as a Rabbit

Most of the rabbit is made up of meat and bones. A prey animal in the wild is a lean animal - not fat and plump like those raised domestically for meat. The amount of muscle meat to bone is close to 50/50. Perhaps a little more meat than bone overall.

Then you have the organs. Imagine the amount of organs compared to the bones. It is a much smaller percentage of the whole animal than the bones and meat.

Now vegetable matter. In the animal's stomach and intestines there will be things like grasses, herbs, berries, seeds and so forth. No grains apart from some grass seeds in season. A small amount of grains are included during the harvest season, nature wonderfully provides the extra energy as the animals are storing up fat reserves for the winter. Lots of leafy green vegetable matter all pulped up. Again, a smaller percentage than the amount of bones and meat.

Now, visualize those three things making up the animal - meat/bones, organs, vegetable matter.

Imagine the prey animal living in an environment that is not over grazed, has never been sprayed with pesticides or herbicides and has lovely healthy rich soil. The diet it is eating is full of nutrients and trace elements and has good levels of essential fatty acids. The prey animal is also a whole animal and includes the things most people don't buy commercially such as eyes and brain etc. (things higher in omega 3's). To emulate this, we can include things like kelp/alfalfa and flax/fish oil (All found in Dynamite Showdown).

The digestive tract is also rich with enzymes and bacteria. This is where good probiotics such as Dyna-Pro can help to reproduce a natural diet.

When a wild dog killed its rabbit, it would eat the stomach contents first and some of the other "prime portions", then bury the carcass. It would return to the kill for weeks, enjoying the aroma and taste of meat so rotten and full of bacteria that it would certainly kill a human being. Some scientists have speculated that these festering bacteria actually improved the nutritional content of each meal, giving the dog a rich variety of bacterial cuisine!

General Raw Feeding Guidelines

1. Feed the best whole, raw, (and if possible) organic diet, as close to the animal's natural diet as possible.
2. Feed based on normal appetite.
 - a. Once or twice a day for healthy eaters.
 - b. Every other day for many northern breeds or dogs who often skip meals.
3. Use and rotate a variety of suggested foods.
 - a. Look for balance over time. Not every meal has to be perfect.
4. Pulp vegetables to break down cell walls.
 - a. Fresh or Frozen - either is fine.
5. Do not feed heated, rancid or hydrogenated oils and fats.
 - a. Oils should be from whole sources -olive, peanut, flax seed, castor, etc.
6. Fast healthy adults one meal per week - unless pregnant or lactating
7. NEVER feed cooked bones
8. Use proper food handling precautions -Raw chicken and meats can breed bacteria on counters and cutting boards.
9. Provide good quality drinking water at all times.
10. Never microwave food.
11. Let your veterinarian know you feed raw and contact them if you have any health concerns for your pet.

How Much to Feed:

Dogs - 75% Raw Meat & Bones (RMB's) - 25% Vegetables

Cats - 90 - 95% Raw Meat & Bones (RMB's) - 5 - 10% Vegetables

A usual starting place is approximately 2% to 5% of body weight per day. However, this will differ per energy level, metabolism, etc. In order to become nutritionally balanced, I recommend feeding as much as the animal wants (within reason) for the first couple of weeks. After this time it should be apparent how their weight and energy levels are doing, and to estimate proper amounts. Keep an eye on their weight and increase or decrease their meal size as their needs change.

A typical homemade raw diet may include:

- ◆ Meats (beef, chicken, turkey, rabbit, fish, lamb, etc.)
- ◆ Raw, meaty bones (raw chicken necks or backs, turkey necks, ox tails, chicken wings, etc.)
- ◆ Vegetables (carrots, celery, broccoli, green beans, squash, sweet potatoes, collard greens, romaine, ginger, garlic, spinach, beets, cauliflower, etc.) and fruits
- ◆ Yogurt
- ◆ Whole raw or partially cooked eggs (I prefer eggs be boiled for 30 to 60 seconds to denature the egg white to improve absorption)
- ◆ Organ meats (heart, liver, gizzards)
- ◆ Other supplements (Dynamite Showdown, Dyna-Pro, Ester-C)
- ◆ Essential fatty acids (flax seed oil, salmon oil, grape seed oil, etc. for Omega-3 and Omega-6) if needed for coat or developmental issues.

Meats and RMB's (Raw Meaty Bones)

Start with the basics - raw chicken bones - carcasses, wings, necks. For the majority of raw feeders - this is the base of the majority of their dogs meals. However, if chicken is not available readily, use what is available locally - raw meaty - lamb, beef, venison, duck, rabbit, kangaroo, pig, raw whole fish.

Raw meat and eggs provide a appropriate array of amino acids/proteins, enzymes, antioxidants, vitamins A, C, D, E, K, B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B12, Biotin, Choline, Folic Acid, Inositol, Iodine, Pantothenic Acid, PABA, fatty acids, Calcium, Phosphorus, Magnesium, Iron, Potassium, Chromium, Copper, Manganese, Selenium, Sodium, Sulfur, Vanadium, Zinc and CoQ10 in the most bio-available form!

Raw meat also encourages a correct body pH - thereby assisting in digestion and reducing degenerative and inflammatory problems associated with over-acidic systems.

Raw bones are very different than bonemeal. Bonemeal is cooked and largely indigestible. It is often high in lead content. Raw necks are a tremendous source of digestible cartilage. Bones help to firm stools, provide correct Calcium/ Phosphorus ratios and clean teeth.

Basic Meat Guidelines:

- ◆ Feed muscle meat in chunks or ground as a burger to assist with feeding vegetables and supplements.
- ◆ Attempt to limit meat or eggs to one source per meal. (e.g. only chicken, or only beef at each meal) It is easier on the digestive system.
- ◆ If worried about bacteria, soak the meat in a dilute solution of Nutribiotic GSE (Grapefruit Seed Extract). Use 5-6 drops of GSE per cup of water and soak for about 15 minutes. Use hot water if you want to warm up frozen meat and bones while killing bacteria.

Vegetables and Fruits for your animals:

Unlike meats, vegetables are best when fed as a mixture of different vegetables with each meal. The more variety the better. They act synergistically and enhance the overall nutritional value of the meal.

It is a good idea to puree vegetables to break down the cell walls and release the nutrients. When vegetables are fed in large chunks very little of the material is actually digested. I prefer to use a food processor to mix together as many vegetables as I have available and then freeze this mix in practical sized servings.

A juicer is also an excellent way to accomplish this. Put the vegetables through the juicer and then add the juice back to the pulp.

Good Vegetables for Meal Planning

- ◆ Dark green leafy vegetables: Kale, Spinach, Romaine, Beet Greens, Swiss Chard, Parsley, Dandelion, etc.
- ◆ Green Beans
- ◆ Carrots
- ◆ Broccoli
- ◆ Cauliflower
- ◆ Cabbage (limited amounts)
- ◆ Asparagus
- ◆ Beets
- ◆ Brussels Sprouts
- ◆ Squash
- ◆ Sweet Potatoes
- ◆ Turnips and Rutabagas

Fruits are good too!

- ◆ Bananas
- ◆ Berries
- ◆ Apples
- ◆ Peaches

Vegetables to Avoid - or Limit

- ◆ Nightshade plants
 - ◆ Onions
 - ◆ Eggplants
 - ◆ Tomatoes
- ◆ White Potatoes
- ◆ Excessive Garlic
- ◆ Large amounts of cabbages, cauliflowers, broccoli or brussel sprouts over a long time can suppress thyroid function.

Occasional Problems When Feeding a Raw Diet

Enteritis

When feeding raw meat and raw bones, your pet may have occasional episodes of diarrhea and/or vomiting. This is most likely to occur when first switching to raw while the digestive system is getting used to the new enzyme levels. Not all animals fed raw will experience diarrhea or vomiting.

Expect formed stools coated with mucus; your animal is cleansing its intestines – as long as the stools are well formed and the animal is not vomiting there is little to be concerned about.

In the case of loose stools or vomiting always reach for a probiotic FIRST! I recommend (and swear by) Dyna Pro. It is a powerful probiotic which resets the beneficial gut micro-flora with stabilized acidophilus fermentation extract, B-vitamins, pH stabilizers and the minerals needed to keep the digestive tract healthy. I use it for general digestive support, stopping colic, enteritis . . . any time the system will be under stress. For instance, when shipping, showing, breeding or working the horse or dog.

Detox Symptoms

Common reactions to switching to a raw diet from chemically preserved kibbles or canned foods are detox complaints. As the system starts getting the enzymes that it needs it starts dumping stored up toxins. If the liver and kidneys are too overloaded the toxins have to go somewhere so the lymph system takes over. The largest organ in the lymph system is the skin and often an animal, especially one already fighting allergies, will develop itchy skin or hives.

Other detox symptoms can be eye or ear discharge, bad breath or shedding. In fact, once on a raw diet your animal may shed all of its old coat so that new coat can come in.

None of these responses are reasons to stop feeding raw! In fact, they are a good indication that long stored junk is being cleansed from the system.

Myths about Feeding Raw

Chicken Bones are Dangerous!!!

This is one of the biggest myths of all time! My answer is that God never cooked a chicken for a wolf. Raw chicken bones are fantastic for your dog. They are soft enough so that they bend easily, and break well for the dog to digest. Once cooked, the calcium hardens making the cooked chicken bones very dangerous.

So could a raw chicken bone kill a dog? Anything is theoretically possible. Certainly scientifically you can't prove a negative argument. However what we do know is that dogs have died from inhaling kibble the wrong way and choking and suffocating to death.

Won't Bacteria Kill My Pet?

As a natural scavenger and omnivore, the dog's digestive system is well-adapted for consuming a raw diet and can tolerate foods containing a wide range of bacteria. In fact, a wide range of active bacterial cultures in the dog's digestive tract will make it less susceptible to compromise by new or harmful bacterium. Dogs greet each other in bacteria laden places of the body, happily gorge on weeks old dead rodents and birds and will often eat feces to attempt to balance their mineral needs.

Cats are obligate carnivores and eat FRESH meat in the wild, but do not typically scavenge old kills. Proper food handling is important to reduce the possibility of enteritis (vomiting and/or diarrhea) from contaminated food.

Raw Reading and Internet References:

- ◆ "The Nature of Animal Healing" - Martin Goldstein, DVM
- ◆ "Raw Meaty Bones" - Dr Tom Lonsdale
- ◆ "Give Your Dog a Bone" - Dr. Ian Billinghurst
- ◆ "The BARF Diet" - Dr. Ian Billinghurst
- ◆ "Reigning Cats and Dogs" - Pat McKay
- ◆ "Switching to Raw"- Sue Johnson
- ◆ "The Ultimate Diet" - Kymythy Schultz
- ◆ "Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats" - Richard Pitcairn, DVM
- ◆ "Home Prepared Dog and Cat Diets: Healthful Alternative" - Donald Strombeck DVM
- ◆ "It's For the Animals! Cook Book" - Helen McKinnon
- ◆ "Food Pets Die For" - Ann Martin
- ◆ www.GrandAdventuresRanch.com - Information on feeding raw and purchasing raw appropriate supplements.
- ◆ Online Raw Feeding List reference with 50+ lists - <http://www.bluegrace.com/barflists.html>