

WSAVA Global Nutrition Committee Statement on Risks of Raw Meat-Based Diets

Veterinarians and pet owners share a common goal: To keep animals under our care as healthy as possible. Nutrition is the foundation of health so it is critical that any diet we feed to dogs or cats - whether it be a conventional commercial cooked diet, a commercial raw meat-based diet (RMBD) or a home-prepared diet - is safe and nutritionally complete and balanced. With ample scientific knowledge available regarding the nutrient requirements of dogs and cats and the wide availability of good quality nutritionally balanced commercial pet foods, there is no excuse for pets to be eating a diet that is deficient, unbalanced, or dangerously excessive in any given nutrient. Pet owners and veterinarians are responsible for ensuring that pets are fed a nutritionally complete and balanced diet. It is also important that selected diets are made with stringent quality control standards to ensure consistency of formulation, and the safety of the ingredients and the final diet. The World Small Animal Veterinary Association's (WSAVA's) Global Nutrition Committee's Toolkit, <http://www.wsava.org/nutrition-toolkit>, includes guidelines for selecting safe and properly formulated diets.

Home-made RMBDs have a high risk for contamination with bacteria, parasites, and other pathogens. In addition to the risks of nutritional inadequacy and contamination with bacteria and parasites, other health concerns for an animal eating a RMBD include risks from ingestion of bones if they are included (e.g., constipation, diarrhea, dental fractures, gastrointestinal obstructions) and diet-induced hyperthyroidism from excessive ingestion of thyroid tissue.

There is currently no properly documented evidence of health benefits for RMBD, but there are well documented risks. As such, the WSAVA Global Nutrition Committee recommends that RMBD not be fed to dogs and cats.

AVMA statement

<https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Pages/Raw-or-Undercooked-Animal-Source-Protein-in-Cat-and-Dog-Diets.aspx>

Canadian VMA statement

<http://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/raw-food-diets-for-pets>

AAHA statement

https://www.aaha.org/professional/resources/raw_protein_diet.aspx#gsc.tab=0

Review article

Freeman LM, Chandler ML, Hamper BA, Weeth LP. Current knowledge about the risks and benefits of raw meat-based diets for dogs and cats. J Am Vet Med Assoc 2013; 243: 1549-1558.

<http://avmajournals.avma.org/doi/abs/10.2460/javma.243.11.1549>

This topic and others will be discussed during the Global Nutrition stream at WSAVA World Congress 2017 in Copenhagen on Tuesday 26 September 2017. Full details at www.wsava2017.com