

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Raw Meat-Based Diets for Pets

#### Is meat for human consumption safer for my pet?

No. In its raw form, meat for human consumption is not free of harmful pathogens such as bacteria and parasites.

According to [Health Canada](#):

“[...] roughly one in eight Canadians (or four million people) get sick due to domestically acquired food-borne diseases (Thomas et al., 2013). Reports show that ***Campylobacter spp.*** are the cause of the highest number of cases, followed by ***Salmonella spp.***, ***Yersinia enterocolitica***, and ***Escherichia coli* O157:H7** (Thomas et al., 2013). [...] **All of these organisms are known to be associated with raw meats and raw poultry.** ”

Health Canada has also issued [guidelines](#) on the safe handling and cooking of raw meat, to reduce the risk of food poisoning among Canadians. [Health Canada](#) acknowledges that raw meat may contain bacteria that could cause disease if it is not handled or cooked properly.

#### The raw meat-based food I buy is made according to NRC or AAFCO recommendations. Is this a quality guarantee?

Not at all...

The [National Research Council \(NRC\)](#) determines the nutritional needs of different species of animals ([dog, cat, fish, small ruminants, etc.](#)) based on certain parameters such as stage of life and level of physical activity. The NRC's reports are used by professionals, scientists, universities and the food industry. They are also used to establish standards for labelling and advertising animal food products on the market (package, label, advertising, promotion, etc.).

The [Association of American Feed Control Officials \(AAFCO\)](#), a US non-profit organization, explains the NRC's nutritional profiles in easy-to-understand language to establish guidelines for the animal food industry and help consumers compare the various offerings. That said, the AAFCO guidelines do not take all the aspects of the NRC nutritional profiles into account. This could lead to a false sense of security for an owner who buys pet food stamped AAFCO.

It should also be noted that the AAFCO does not test or approve or certify pet foods. Nevertheless, the AAFCO guidelines are a good starting point. The NRC sets a scientific standard, and the AAFCO sets minimum standards for the industry.

Although these two organizations are recognized, reliable references for animal nutrition, their recommendations apply to cooked food. They are not a reference for food safety.

Ultimately the OMVQ encourages pet owners to check with their veterinarian, who has the extensive knowledge required about animal nutrition.

**Do the various preservation processes on the market, such as freezing, freeze-drying and high-pressure processing, result in a product that is free of harmful pathogens such as bacteria and parasites?**

No. Although freezing kills the majority of parasites, it does not kill *Trichinella*, which is a dangerous parasite found especially in wild game. Furthermore, freezing does not eliminate bacteria, which, if present, will start to multiply as soon as the food is thawed.

Freeze-drying and high-pressure processing do not kill the micro-organisms present in raw meat but simply prevent them from multiplying.

So, for example, if there are three bacteria present at the time of processing, there will still be three bacteria afterward. They cannot grow or multiply, however.

**Why doesn't my veterinarian recommend a raw meat-based diet?**

Veterinarians may have many reasons for not recommending a raw meat-based diet (RMBD) for your pet. Talking to your vet will help you understand the reasons for their recommendations.

A veterinarian is always obliged to:

- Protect and improve public health
- Practise their profession in accordance with the standards of practice and current medical science
- Refrain from using insufficiently proven means of treatment
- Fully and objectively explain to their client the nature and scope of the problem stemming from facts brought to their attention
- Safeguard their professional independence and avoid any situation of real or perceived conflict of interest

As such, we are of the opinion that your veterinarian is your prime resource when it comes to animal nutrition. Your vet has the scope of knowledge required to:

- Assess your pet's nutritional needs based on specific parameters such as stage of life, level of activity and specific medical conditions
- Inform you about all the aspects of a particular diet, such as optimal nutritional balance, food industry standards, available options and food safety
- And, ultimately, advise you about the appropriate diet for the specific needs of your pet

### **Wild canines eat raw meat. Why shouldn't domesticated dogs do the same?**

Although dogs are anatomically carnivores, they have adapted to domestication over time and become more akin to omnivores with carnivorous tendencies. It has been scientifically proven that there are many genetic, anatomical and physiological differences between domesticated dogs and wild canines. This adaptation to life with humans has changed the nutritional needs of domesticated dogs and the type of food that can provide them with optimal health, such as their capacity to digest the starch in grains.

Wild animals are not safe from the parasitism, malnutrition and infectious diseases that come from eating raw meat, and in nature these animals are also often deficient in important nutrients. Of course, wild carnivores eat whatever they are able to find, which is not necessarily the ideal diet for long-term health.

### **What role do advertising and attractive packaging play in the choice of pet food?**

Whatever type of pet food they choose, owners need to be aware that, as is the case for many consumer products, enormous sums are spent by the industry to market their brands, develop attractive packaging and advertising in the media to convince you that their food is made from the very best "fresh," "natural" or "homemade" ingredients...

### **Additional resources**

- MAPAQ (Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec): [www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Productions/santeanimale/maladies/transmissibleshumain/Pages/Viandescrues.aspx](http://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Productions/santeanimale/maladies/transmissibleshumain/Pages/Viandescrues.aspx) (in French)
- Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA): [www.veterinairesauCanada.net/documents/raw-meat-based-diets-for-pets](http://www.veterinairesauCanada.net/documents/raw-meat-based-diets-for-pets)
- FDA (Food and Drug Administration USA): [www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/animal-health-literacy/get-facts-raw-pet-food-diets-can-be-dangerous-you-and-your-pet](http://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/animal-health-literacy/get-facts-raw-pet-food-diets-can-be-dangerous-you-and-your-pet)
- CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention): [www.cdc.gov/healthypets/publications/pet-food-safety.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/publications/pet-food-safety.html)
- Feline tuberculosis caused by Mycobacterium bovis infection of domestic UK cats associated with feeding a commercial raw food diet. (2020). [/pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33091235](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33091235)