

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FEEDING COMMERCIAL RAW DIETS**

### **1. How do I switch my pet over to a raw diet?**

We recommend using stainless steel bowls that can be sanitized after each feeding. Feed twice daily. Dogs and cats who are not used to eating raw should be given acidophilus, enzymes, or both during the days preceding the switch in diets. This will help their system to digest the meat more easily. If you do not feed enzymes or acidophilus before the switch, your pet may have loose stools and flatulence (gas). Their systems will adjust to the switch, it will just take longer. We recommend Culturelle and Prozyme at the Animal Doctor. If your pet is not lactose intolerant, you may try natural yogurt, DanActive®, or Activia®. Enteric coated products are most effective.

### **2. Are commercial raw meat diets complete?**

You may add supplements, but it isn't necessary. Feeding a raw natural diet should create a healthy pet with a strong immune system, shiny coat, clean teeth, balance energy level – all of the things that supplements are given to achieve. For dogs, you may want to feed vegetables, Nature's Menu Forage Formula or Green Alternative to enhance their diet by mimicking the herbs, vegetations, roots, and stomach content of prey animals and berries that they would forage for in their natural environment. The Forage Formula also has many supplements added such as bee pollen, flax, seaweeds, herbs, etc. For cats, we recommend Green Alternative, an herbal supplement to mimic nature's provisions. Introduce supplements individually and slowly after your pet has converted to the meat. Forage Formula may not be a good choice for pets with allergies. Veggies must be blended.

### **3. Can I mix raw diets with the dry or canned food I fed?**

We do not recommend that you feed it with kibble. Dogs and cats are not meant to eat excessive carbohydrates, especially from processed grains. If you feed dry for convenience sake or to decrease cost, feed it at a separate meal or mixed. Note which method your pet tolerates best. Adding canned food is a good idea. Whole cooked grains are better than kibble!

### **4. Do I have to feed added vegetables?**

No, but if you'd like to enhance the diet with vegetables, avoid or cook the gas producers (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower). Try carrots, sweet potatoes, squash, pumpkin, spinach, kale, green beans, celery, apples, pears, mangos and bananas. Peppers and mushrooms are okay. Collect your leftovers in a Tupperware. Run them through a blender to break down for better digestion. Remember, carnivores eat "pre-digested" veggies from the gut of their prey. The cruciferous vegetables should be cooked or steamed, in addition to blending, if fed.

*Note: **NO** onions, grapes or raisins – they could be toxic.*

### **5. How much raw diet do I feed?**

There is a feeding chart on each package. The amount to feed greatly varies from pet to pet depending upon age, activity level, breed, size, whether they are nursing or pregnant, etc. You feed 1% to 2% of your pets' weight. For example, if your dog weighs 100 pounds, 1% is 1 pound, so you feed 1 to 2 pounds of meat daily. But each dog is different and you will have to gauge your pets' appetite. If you can see the ribs, you're not feeding enough and if you can't feel the ribs you are feeding too much. For an average dog, you will feed 4 ounces of meat diet per every 10 pounds of your pets' weight. Feeding amounts are only a recommendation. PUPPIES SHOULD BE FED AS MUCH AS 10% OF THEIR BODY WEIGHT.

### **6. How long will raw diets keep in the refrigerator or freezer?**

Raw diets will keep in the freezer for at least one year and 3 to 4 days in the refrigerator. Tip for some brands: Store the meat package inside a glass container with lid in the refrigerator to prevent messy leakage.

### **7. Can you let the meat diet thaw out and then re-freeze it?**

Yes, you can thaw and re-freeze the meat diets. The meat should be thawed in the refrigerator or under cold water, never at room temperature, but this is not recommended.

### **8. Can you switch from one raw diet to another from day to day?**

Yes, you can switch from one diet to another, but for pets just starting on a raw diet it will be easier on the digestive system to stick with one diet for a while. Some pets prefer variety and some prefer one type of meat to others. For some, it may be necessary to feed one type of meat for an extended period of time.

### **9. Can you cook commercial raw diets? Why do you feed it raw?**

We recommend that you feed diets raw because the digestive system of dogs and cats is biologically able to digest and absorb their nutrients from a prey in its raw form. Processing destroys nutrients and probiotics. Some people do choose to pan sear the meat diets to release the scents of cooked meat as the pet is used to with canned or kibble pet foods. If you do choose to heat meat diets, we recommend pan searing just the outside of it as opposed to cooking it through or microwaving it. Diets with ground bone should not be cooked. **EVEN COOKED MEAT DIETS ARE BETTER THAN NO MEAT AT ALL OR COMMERCIAL KIBBLE IF THEY ARE BALANCED.** Grocery store meat is not balanced with calcium. Carnivores require bone or a calcium source!

### **10. What if my pet won't eat the meat diets?**

Some pets prefer one type of meat to another. If they don't like beef, you may want to try lamb, turkey, duck, chicken, rabbit, bison or venison. Pets, especially cats, can be very finicky. Diets vary in their consistency and vegetable content. Many pets get used to the same food and are suspicious of a new type of food. We recommend gradually mixing the new diet with the old. A dog can be switched cold turkey, never starve a cat. Be persistent. Provide only fresh bits of food. You may want to pan sear the outside of it to release the scents that they are more familiar with in their canned or kibble food. This will entice them to try it and when they are used to it, you should no longer have to sear it.

\*\* We at the Animal Doctor believe that you should introduce the raw meat slowly, especially with cats. They can be finicky so add a very small amount of raw meat, usually starting with chicken, to the regular diet and slowly wean them off while adding more raw meat. With cats this process might take days, weeks or even a month, so please be patient. Initially mix the meat with foods/treats you know your cat really likes, then eliminate these gradually. Adding canned to raw with warm water helps a lot! Remember, prey is raw and warm!

### **11. What if my pet gets loose stools or vomits when they eat the raw diets?**

This is a very normal and natural response when changing from one food to another. Many times they will eat it again if their stomach rejects it the first time, which is also very normal and natural. Feeding plain yogurt, enzymes or probiotics will definitely reduce the likelihood of vomiting or loose stools. Once their body is used to the meat in its raw form, the GI tract will adjust. You will not need to continue to feed probiotics and they will not vomit or have loose stools any more. In fact, you will notice greatly decreased stool production because the diet is so well metabolized. Without fillers there's very little waste!

Remember, a little loose stool is also considered a "cleansing" effect. Some pets vomit because they like the food too much and eat it too quickly. Tip: Spread the food out on a plate so they have to lick it up slowly. Also feed multiple pets separately so they're not competing and "racing" to eat.

## **12. How can raw diets be a cat food and dog food in one?**

Many are formulated to meet the needs of a cat, which is actually higher protein than the needs of a dog, but not dangerously so. Cats and dogs are both carnivores and need to eat meat and organs. Nature's Menu is formulated by two of the top veterinary nutritionists in the country to be complete and balanced for both dogs and cats in all stages of life. We do recommend that you enhance the diet for dogs with Nature's Menu Forage Formula or vegetables and especially appropriate raw bones. Companion dog variety has increased veggies for dogs. Blended veggies may be added to Nature's Variety Prairie and Stella & Chewy's, although this is not necessary.

## **13. How do commercial raw diets on the market differ?**

Nature's Menu is 100% meat and organs. It does not contain any ground bone, vegetables, or fruit. Some people who feed raw still feed a little bit of kibble or canned food for cost and convenience. So when they do feed the meat diets they should be a lot of meat and organs as the pet doesn't need any extra filler material in with the meat diets. Nature's Menu diets have a lot of meat for the buck!

*- Nature's Menu offers an organic diet and a free-range diet. Companion uses human grade meat sources, with a lot of quality veggies. Great for dogs with kidney disease. Nature's Variety uses organic and grass fed sources. Primal has many organic ingredients and a lot of well-blended vegetation. PawNaturaw is all certified organic. Stella & Chewy's is tested pathogen-free.*

*Most commercial raw contain ground bone and should not be cooked, check labels!*

## **14. How do I feed a raw diet while traveling with my pet?**

If you buy a small styrofoam cooler and pack it full of meat and keep it sealed well, the meat diets will stay frozen for several days. It is best to pack it full of frozen meat diets as opposed to ice. The ice actually melts more quickly than the meat, then as the meat is sitting in the water it melts faster. Another option is to go to the store and buy raw meat and organs or canned tuna or mackerel and substitute for a few days. This option doesn't provide for the vitamin and mineral mix and appropriate ratio of organ to muscle meat as in the commercial diets, but it is better than feeding a commercial kibble. This is acceptable short-term. Also, there is a cooler on the market that plugs into your vehicle with a cigarette lighter adapter.

\*\* At Animal Doctor we carry several dehydrated meat products and canned foods. These are great substitutes and come in handy if you forget to thaw the meat. Keep some of these in your cabinet. Use them once weekly, if you're in a pinch or take them on a trip!

Nature's Variety Instinct, EVO and Merrick are high meat, high moisture canned diets which are nice adjuncts to raw. Mulligan Stew, Tripett, Weruva, and Tiki Cat are nice supplements.

## **15. Any other natural diet feeding tips?**

In nature, sometimes a dog doesn't catch his prey and goes without a meal. Therefore we recommend a 1-2 meal "fast" per week. This means no meat, but you could feed some Forage Formula, blended fruits and veggies, and organic/vegetarian fed free-ranging raw egg or, if your dog is not lactose intolerant, perhaps a little cottage cheese or yogurt. This could also be the day you feed a larger raw bone. Do not fast a cat. All pets, especially cats, consume raw best when mixed with a small amount of canned and hot water. This "stew" is luscious and safe if consumed immediately. Remember, prey is raw and warm.

## **16. What is this about raw bones?**

We have always taught cooked bones are dangerous. Heating bone causes it to become brittle. Raw bones are softer. Feeding the right sized bone to the right size dog can be very beneficial emotionally and for their teeth! Your dog may never need a dental! Use common sense when feeding raw bones. Take away small or sharp pieces. We can guide you as to how to choose the right bones for your companion. He/she will love you for this decision!