



Avenue Veterinary Centre Ltd

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Registered Company No. 06541790

Veterinary formulated dry and wet diets undergo rigorous testing and cost thousands to develop, to ensure your pet gets the best nutrition possible

Raw food diets – yes or no?

We have an increasing number of clients asking us about raw food diets for their pets and we wanted to provide some advice on this.

At AVC, we do NOT recommend feeding raw meat diets for the following key reasons:

- 1) **There have been no truly adequate feeding trials for raw meat diets to check that they can provide the right nutritional requirements for your pet.**
 - A raw meat diet can result in imbalances in calcium (resulting in weak bones), nutritional deficiencies, constipation and diarrhoea.
- 2) **Raw meats contain bacteria which can be extremely harmful to both you and your pet.**
 - As a result of this risk, we can not prescribe high-dose steroids to pets on raw meat diets, which are a necessary treatment for some conditions.
- 3) **Feeding bones to your pet (raw or cooked) can result in problems with splinters and/or obstructions, which can be fatal, as well as causing fractured teeth.**

Some commercial raw diets claim to be bacteria free – this isn't possible! They may be free of one particular bacteria (eg. Salmonella) but could still contain any other bacteria e.g. campylobacter, listeria

We appreciate there is a lot of conflicting advice on raw food diets and would like to try and explain some of these:

Some reports say: *“Raw meat is what they would eat in the wild. It's more natural.”*

We say: Our well-loved **domesticated pet dogs have evolved a long way from their wolf ancestors** and now have different requirements. Good quality commercial dog foods are formulated to be tasty! And in the wild, a wolf would eat the whole carcass – this is not the same as feeding select chunks of meat in a raw food diet.

Some reports say: *“My dog is on a raw food diet and has no problems.”*

We say: On a raw diet, your dog may appear healthy on the outside, but you don't know what's happening on the inside. And there is still **the risk of bacterial infection**, the **inability of vets to give high-dose steroids** if necessary and the **risk of splinters, obstructions and tooth fracture from bones**.

Some reports say: *“If meat is cooked, it loses the enzymes needed by the dog for digestion – raw is better.”*

We say: This simply isn't true! **Your dog's body provides the enzymes needed to digest food and doesn't need raw meat to provide these.**

Some reports say: *“My dog doesn't tolerate commercial dog foods. He's healthier now on a raw food diet.”*

We say: There are a huge variety of commercial dog foods available, and some dogs are sensitive to some of these. However, **if your dog has problems on a commercial diet, please let us know** as it may be a sign of a problem – there are safe, veterinary formulated diets specifically for these problems which have undergone rigorous testing. **A raw food diet is not necessary.**

Although we can not recommend a raw food diet, if you still wish to feed a raw food diet to your pet please follow some basic advice:

- Feed a commercial “complete raw diet” to give your pet the best chance of getting the required nutrients - don't try and make your own.
- Never feed a raw meat diet until your dog is fully grown.
- Follow strict hygiene control when dealing with any raw meat and wash hands thoroughly.
- Worm your pet regularly.
- Please let us know that you feed a raw food diet as this will affect our investigations and treatments of certain conditions.



Mark C. Picton
BVSc MRCVS

Surgery hours by appointment

Mon-Sat 9.00 - 11.00am Mon-Fri 2.00 - 3.30pm Mon-Fri 4.30 - 6.30pm