# Raw protein diet

*Adopted by the American Animal Hospital Association Board of Directors, October 2011.*

Past proponents of raw food diets believed that this was the healthiest food choice for pets. It was also assumed that feeding such a diet would cause no harm to other animals or to humans. There have subsequently been multiple studies showing both these premises to be false. Based on overwhelming scientific evidence, AAHA does not advocate or endorse feeding pets any raw or dehydrated non-sterilized foods, including treats that are of animal origin.

Homemade raw food diets are unsafe because retail meats for human consumption can be contaminated with pathogens. Studies that have been done on both commercially available and homemade raw protein diets have found a high percentage (30–50 percent) of them contaminated with pathogenic organisms, and up to 30 percent of the dogs fed such diets may shed pathogenic organisms in their stool. Many of the pathogens found in raw protein diets can be transmitted to the human population by contact with the food itself, pet, or environmental surfaces. A disturbing number of these organisms have also been shown to be resistant to multiple antimicrobials.

Raw protein diets are now demonstrated to be a health risk for several groups, including:

- The pets consuming the diet
- Other animals in contact with these pets or their feces
- Human family members
- The public

People at highest risk of serious disease from the enteric pathogens found in raw diets include those that are very young, old, or immune-compromised. These are the very groups that are the focus of most animal-assisted intervention (AAI) programs. It is especially important that therapy pets involved in AAI not be fed raw protein diets.

AAHA is committed to the human community, the veterinary medical profession, our AAHA hospitals, and the patients we serve in recommending the best known medical practices using evidence-based medicine. We value the relationships between our pets and their families, along with the positive impact that they have on the larger population, such as in AAI programs. Feeding a raw protein diet no longer concerns only each individual pet, but has become a larger community health issue; for this reason, AAHA can no longer support or advocate the feeding of raw protein diets to pets.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) and the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) have both endorsed this statement.

Resources:

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