RAW ESSENTIALS  CATFOOD CONFUSION!

RAW FISH
Fish contains thiaminase, an enzyme that will destroy thiamine (vitamin B1). Thiamine deficiency causes severe neurological symptoms and can be fatal.

Cats have a high requirement for B vitamins - a continual dietary source is required to prevent deficiency. Deficiency is very rare in cats consuming their natural diet, as B vitamins are plentiful in animal tissues. A cat would have to eat fish at every meal for a long time to develop a deficiency. We recommend cats consume fish up to three times a week (variety is the key when raw feeding and we would encourage the feeding of any particular food up to three times a week but no more).

Preservatives in fresh-meat cat-foods inhibit thiamine absorption. Be careful if feeding meat-only products that have been preserved with a sulphur-based preservative. These preservatives "hold" the colour of the meat for an unnaturally long time so they stay looking good in the fridge. The preservatives can also trigger asthma in cats.

Products marketed for pets (eg commercial fresh 'pet meat', 'pet mince' or processed/manufactured 'pet food rolls') may contain sulphite preservatives. Thiamine deficiency can occur when dogs and cats are fed on a diet containing sulphite preservatives.

A CONCERNED PARTICIPANT ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE DIRECTED US TO A WEBSITE\(^1\) WITH A LIST OF 20 THINGS ‘YOUR CAT SHOULD NEVER EAT.’ MANY OF THE ITEMS ON THE LIST APPEARED CONTRADICTORY TO THE ADVICE WE GIVE CAT OWNERS AT RAW ESSENTIALS. THIS ARTICLE IS INTENDED TO CLEAR UP ANY CONFUSION OVER THOSE ITEMS.

\(^1\)http://pets.webmd.com/cats/ss/slides how-foods-your-cat-should-never-eat

BONES
This is a common area of concern for pet owners.

There are two circumstances under which bone feeding is dangerous. If the bone is cooked, it is changed structurally and likely to splinter. These shards pose an obvious health risk to pets.

If inappropriately sized bones are fed they can cause problems. Bones that are too small are a choking hazard in pets that are new to raw feeding, or have a tendency to gulp their food. Bones that are too big and hard can cause tooth fractures.

Bones should be fed with plenty of meat on them. They should come from a prey source which you pet could reasonably be expected to hunt if they were in the wild. Bone is a vital part of a complete and balanced raw diet. Mineral imbalances will develop on a meat-only diet. A cat that is fed a raw, meaty bone diet is also much less likely to develop dental health issues (and the cardiac and kidney issues that can follow).

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments.
Food Poisoning From Raw Meat

Food safety is a huge topic at the moment.

There are some papers circulating which claim that raw feeding of pets is a public health risk (both to pets and humans). The claims in these papers are made based upon a list of references to several studies. Unfortunately, the general public do not have access to these studies.

Being a Veterinary-run nutrition practice, we are able to access the studies. Time and again the study authors make statements that despite the increasing popularity of raw diets, and despite the presence of Salmonella on some raw diets (particularly those of chicken-origin) “no confirmed cases of human Salmonellosis have been associated with these diets” and that “there have been no published reports of Salmonellosis occurring in dogs as a result of exposure to natural pet treats.”

Dogs and cats fed a balanced raw diet have a more acidic stomach than their biscuits fed counterparts. This acidity, combined with the presence of anti-bacterial salivary enzymes, and a short gastrointestinal tract that does not allow much time for fermentation, means that they are less likely to develop illness from exposure to pathogens. Sourcing high quality prey from the human food chain, ensuring that it has been adequately frozen, and feeding it in a sensible manner will also reduce risks.

In terms of risk to human health, pet owners should apply the same hygiene standards that they employ when dealing with food intended for their own consumption.

Interestingly – commercial, processed petfoods are a common source of pathogenic exposure. There have been numerous recalls of branded biscuits and treats due to contamination with Salmonella and other bacteria. Some of these recalls have been found to be the cause of human illness and hospitalization. As mentioned above, this has so far never been established with raw diets.

Liver

Liver is a very nutritious food. It contains high quality proteins, fats, enzymes and vitamins.

It is important to limit liver intake (in both humans and animals) to prevent vitamin A overdose (a potentially very serious problem).

When a cat hunts and kills prey, they will often ingest a small amount of liver relative to the other parts of a carcass. If it is feed in small amounts relative to a balanced and varied raw meaty bone diet, liver will be safe and highly beneficial.
**Raw Eggs**

Eggs are a highly nutritious food, and there are benefits as well as risks to feeding them raw.

With regards to their interference with biotin absorption, again, this is just a feed-in-moderation issue. Having said that, raw eggs would form a negligible part of the diet for a wild dog or cat in its natural environment, and as such, we would not suggest that are needed as part of a balanced raw diet.

**Fat**

I have come across a self-proclaimed nutritional expert who claimed that cats should not have fat as part of their diet. This is a very dangerous statement.

Cats have an absolute requirement for fat. Without it, they will become deficient in a range of essential micronutrients, and will die.

The best way to incorporate fat in a cat’s diet is to include it, along with meat, bone and organs, in proportions roughly equivalent to a carcass.

If a cat is not raw fed, then it is best to feed the highest quality tinned food you can access. Mixing raw feeding with processed (carb-based) diets creates problems with stomach acidity, and can cause upsets. This is because a cat eating a carb-based diet (cat biscuits or tinned food) will have an alkaline gut relative to the acidic gut of a raw-fed. Trying to digest high levels of protein, fat and bone in an alkaline environment is very challenging.

**Tuna**

Fish at the higher end of the food chain are a heavy metal risk. A dog or cat with an optimal gastrointestinal microflora balance (one which is fed a balanced, species-appropriate diet) is able to bind and expel a greater amount of heavy metal contaminants, and they are thus less susceptible to heavy metal toxicity.

The fatty acids in oily fish are very beneficial for cats and dogs (particularly those with chronic inflammatory health issues) and it is a good idea to include oily fish in the diet 2-3 times per week.

Tinned tuna is not the greatest source of fatty acids. Sardines canned in water are a much better source. They are also less likely to pose a heavy metal risk.

**Cats do not have a strong innate thirst drive. On a dry diet, they are unable to drink enough to make up for the lack of moisture in their food, leading to a chronic state of dehydration.**

**This puts stress on the kidneys. Kidney failure is a very common condition in cats on a dry diet.**

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments.