

Raw Pet Diets – What You Need to Know Before You Feed

Feeding your pet a raw diet may seem natural or trendy — but beneath the surface lies a host of serious health risks for both your animal and your household. Here's what research says and why most vets strongly advise against it. 

Why Raw Diets Are Risky

Raw meat-based diets (sometimes called RMBDs or “BARF” – Biologically Appropriate Raw Food) are widely promoted online, but the science doesn't support the safety or benefits. In fact, nearly all major veterinary organizations — including AVMA, FDA, CVMA, and Tufts — strongly **discourage raw feeding**.

1. Bacterial Contamination

- Raw meat is often contaminated with dangerous bacteria such as **Salmonella**, **Listeria**, and **E. coli**.
- These pathogens can **make your pet sick** — and they **shed the bacteria** in their saliva, feces, and even on their fur, exposing humans.
- Households with **children, elderly people, pregnant women, or immunocompromised individuals** are at even greater risk.

2. Nutritional Imbalance

- Pets require **very specific levels of more than 40 essential nutrients**, including calcium, phosphorus, taurine (especially for cats), and more.
- DIY or pre-packaged raw meals are **often incomplete**, leading to issues like:
 -  Bone deformities (especially in puppies/kittens)
 -  Neurological issues
 -  Heart failure
 -  Taurine deficiency in cats (which can be fatal)

3. Human Health Risks

- Even if your pet doesn't show symptoms, they can be **asymptomatic carriers** of dangerous bacteria.
- Transmission happens through bowls, surfaces, shared beds, toys, and licks to the face.
- There have been **documented human illnesses and hospitalizations** caused by handling raw pet food.

4. Feline-Specific Dangers

- Cats fed raw meat are at high risk for **taurine deficiency**, which leads to **Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM)** — a life-threatening heart condition.
 - Raw bones can also cause:
 - Tooth fractures
 - Intestinal blockages or perforations
 - Choking
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What the Experts Say

- [Tufts Veterinary Nutrition – Raw Diet Review](#)
 - [AVMA – Raw Pet Food Policy](#)
 - [FDA – Safety Warnings](#)
 - [CDC – Pet Food Safety Guidelines](#)
 - [Canadian VMA – Risks of Raw](#)
 - [Feline Taurine Deficiency from Raw Diets](#)
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Safer Alternatives to Raw Feeding

If you're drawn to the “**fresh**” or “**natural**” feeding philosophy, there are **much safer ways** to support your pet's health without the danger:

-  **Cooked Fresh Meals:** Work with a **Board-Certified Veterinary Nutritionists (DACVN or DACVIM-Nutrition)** to formulate a **home-cooked balanced diet** for your pet.
-  **Gently Cooked Commercial Brands:** Some companies offer cooked, human-grade meals that meet **AAFCO nutrient standards** and undergo **feeding trials**.
-  **Use Tools Like:** [Balance.it](#) to analyze and supplement home-prepared food safely.

 Even well-meaning pet parents have accidentally made their animals sick or deficient from improperly balanced meals — always consult a pro.

Final Thoughts

Feeding raw might seem like a loving choice, but love needs to be paired with science. The **risks of contamination, illness, and malnutrition far outweigh any claimed benefit** — and there is currently **no solid evidence** that raw diets are better than cooked, balanced alternatives.

✅ Stick with **evidence-based nutrition** and avoid viral trends that may put your pet's life at risk.

Need help finding a safer food or creating a vet-approved diet plan? I'm here to help! 🐾🐱💙