



The Benefits of a Raw-Food Diet

In 2016, pet food sales in the U.S. reached \$24 billion. With this much revenue at stake, the pet food industry spends a LOT of money on advertising and lobbying to keep consumers spending money on pre-packaged processed pet foods. With so much marketing rhetoric out there, how does one decide what is really best?

Prior to 100 years ago people fed pets actual food. Food made specifically for pets was introduced as a way to profit from the by-products of human food production—agricultural waste from slaughterhouses, grain mills, and processing plants. Ken-L-Ration sold canned horse meat after World War I as a means of disposing of deceased horses. During World War II, pet foods shifted to dry kibble, not because it was better, but simply because metal was rationed. Little thought was given to the actual nutritional value of foods sold.

The situation has improved since those early days, with standards now in place to ensure a basic minimum level of balanced nutrition. But these minimum levels are only what a pet can *survive* on—they are not optimal levels that they would *thrive* on. And legally, a pet food company cannot claim to have superior nutrition over another brand as long as both meet these minimal requirements. This is why they use phrases such as “no other pet food has better nutrition than our brand”—legally, as long as the minimum standards are met, none are indeed better, and none are worse, either. Legally they are all exactly the same.

But they are not all the same. It actually does matter where the protein in your pet food comes from. The worst example of this is the melamine contamination that caused recalls of many pet foods in 2007. Melamine is a high-nitrogen compound, and most standard tests for protein levels in foods test for nitrogen, not the protein itself. When melamine is ingested it can cause kidney failure. It was added to pet food to make the protein levels appear higher than they really were. This helped the foods test out as meeting the minimum standard requirements, but certainly did not add any nutritional value.

Although melamine is no longer being added to pet food, there are still plenty of protein sources of questionable value. The term “meat by-products” can include feathers, hair, hoofs, beaks, and floor sweepings. Even euthanized animals and road kill that has been rotting in the sun for days often find their way into rendering plants to become “meat by-products.” It all may test as protein, but if it’s indigestible protein, what good can it do for your pet?

Not all brands put such shoddy ingredients into their foods. But even the top-end, grain-free, chemical-free, by-product-free brands are still processed. Processing itself destroys many nutrients such as taurine, glutamine, and natural enzymes. The answer to all this is to avoid processed foods entirely, and return to what animals ate before the pet-food industry took over our pets’ nutritional needs—food!

I have recommended raw-food diets for more than 20 years, and have seen nothing but positive results in my patients. A diet change to raw, unprocessed food can have a huge impact on chronic digestive tract issues, allergies, cancer, and many other traditionally difficult-to-treat conditions. As long as the raw food is balanced nutritionally, it is superior to any processed food.

There are several ways to make sure the raw food you feed is balanced. The easiest is to buy one of the many ready-made frozen raw foods available at high-end retailers, including our clinic. The manufacturers have already done all the work of formulating a diet with the optimal levels of nutrients, as well as the work of putting it all together for you. If you enjoy preparing your pet’s meals, or want to save money, our clinic has recipes available, including special recipes for certain medical conditions. Either way, a raw-food diet can greatly extend the life of your beloved pets and help them achieve optimal health. Our friendly staff can help you decide which food is best for your pet.