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Myths about pet food, Part 1 & 2: Raw Foods & Bones

At least some dry kibble food is necessary to have a “complete and balanced” diet for a dog or cat: FALSE

If a General Mills rep at the grocery store told you that Total Cereal was the only thing *you ever* needed to eat because it is “complete and balanced” with all the vitamins and minerals you need to survive would you forego salad, raw fruits, and veggies and all home-cooked meals? No, because you know that even if it really is a great product it is still cooked, processed and absolutely not enough for you to thrive on.

AAFCO allows any company, no matter their ingredients, to label their products “complete and balanced” if they add AAFCO’s vitamin/mineral pre-mix (that is literally labeled with skulls and crossbones). This is unsafe because if a food already has 2 times the RDA of a vitamin or mineral and they add AAFCO’s pack it can go up to 15+ times the RDA of that ingredient and no one tests it because they are just “abiding by the standards”.

However, this leaves the consumer with the assumption that all their pet needs for health is safe, complete, and regulated. AAFCO, though, is not a regulatory agency. They actually only have a list of **recommendations** that they openly admit are not scientifically validated. For AAFCO and the FDA to allow the label of "complete and balanced" they have to abide by the unscientific, invalidated AAFCO “recommendations.”

You don't have your salads and green smoothies tested to verify that they are healthy and actually have vitamins and minerals in them. And you know you don't have to add a synthetic vitamin/mineral supplement to them to be considered healthy. For your pet to thrive, and not just survive, you must add whole, raw foods, such as those made for pets (grocery store raw foods are not safe, see below), or dehydrated raw. You can feed only raw or dehydrated in place of kibble and canned but at the very least supplementing is better than nothing at all.

Feeding dry kibble food is the best way to help keep your pets teeth clean: False

Assuming that dry kibble food will keep your pets teeth clean is like assuming that if you eat pretzels you don't have to brush your teeth. Cooked, processed, crunchy foods are not a substitute for a toothbrush. Some foods specifically claim they are better for dental health because their kibble bites are harder, thus increasing their abrasive quality on the pets teeth. However, if your teeth were still developing large amounts of plaque while eating “only pretzels” and your solution was to, instead, eat peanut brittle because it is harder than pretzels your teeth would never get cleaner. Feeding raw, whole foods encourages natural acid activity to keep tooth enamel free of sediment. This also changes oral pH which helps combat plaque development.

Bacteria can't colonize and grow in environments that aren't primed for their arrival.

Plaque is a colonization of up to 25,000 types of bacteria that thrive in acidic environments. 80% of American dogs and 70% of American cats suffer from gum disease caused by plaque build up. Processed, cooked, starchy and sugary ingredients found in kibble contribute to acidic environments creating the perfect environment

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for plaque build up. By not providing the gut with “food” for plaque (starches and sugars), and by providing raw foods that keep the intestines cleaner with natural good bacteria and enzymes will significantly lessen plaque’s ability to accumulate.

If your pet eats a raw diet then licks your face you could get Salmonella:

FALSE

Canine saliva also contains lysozyme, an enzyme that lyses and destroys bacteria, but more importantly, the absence of plaque means the dog's mouth is no longer a hospitable place for bacteria to inhabit. Thus, the Salmonella bacteria, among others, can pass the mouth and is unable to remain in the mouth long enough to be transmitted. If given the opportunity many dogs also eat cat poop, their own poop, rotten fermented trash, and lick their rears. No one has ever heard of a person getting e.coli, found in all feces, from their dog licking them after any of these activities. Additionally, there are more dry kibble pet food recalls caused by Salmonella contamination each year than there are due to raw pet foods. This happens for a couple of reasons. A) because anti-raw people (vets included) assume that only uncooked foods have potential for Salmonella contamination and do not properly handle their pets cooked foods... not washing their hands after handling or storing the food appropriately, and B) many dry food manufacturers don't properly test their foods for Salmonella prior to leaving their facility because restrictions on pathogens are not as tough on a cooked, processed food... obviously this is a dire oversight on the part of the FDA considering the current Salmonella recalls on dry foods such as Diamond, Taste of the Wild, Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover's Soul, etc. <http://www.dogfoodadvisor.com/dog-food-recalls/>

Raw meats and bones from the grocery store are just as healthy and safe as those designed specifically for pets: FALSE

Raw foods produced for dogs and sold in pet stores are commercially safer than raw meats purchased in grocery stores. The acceptable level of bacteria in meats sold at grocery stores is relatively high because those individuals packaging it do so knowing it is going to be cooked. The acceptable level of bacteria in raw foods produced for dogs is relatively low because it is meant to be fed raw. Additionally, meat processed for dogs has included in it pulverized bones and organs so the nutrient profile is complete, natural, and balanced. Some are also processed with an assortment of fruits and vegetables providing a natural source of anti-oxidants and phyto-nutrients. These foods are flash frozen immediately, and freezer temperatures are continually monitored.

“Good Morning America” tested 100 packages (of grocery store raw meat packaged for human consumption) and found that, for packages of chicken parts, 20 percent tested positive for salmonella. For ground chicken, 54 percent tested positive.”

<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/HealthyLiving/chicken-safe-salmonella/story?id=9049797>

“From the US Center for Disease Control and the US Center for Health Statistics, you can find that...those infections are known to be caused by *food*, not pets. Add to this that there has been research done showing that dogs do not carry Salmonella in their saliva or on their skin, not even after eating 100% Salmonella infected raw food! But, when they do eat Salmonella infected food, about one third of them will show a moderate concentration of Salmonella in their feces – yet no clinical signs of being sick. This means that *the only way* those 29 Salmonella deaths in 2001 and 2002 possibly could have been originating from infection through dogs would be that the people had eaten dog poop from an infected dog... (You can make your own guess at how many of the 29 actually did that!)”



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<http://k9joy.com/dogarticles/doghealth01salmonella.pdf>

Raw bones are likely to break your pets' teeth and if they splinter they can perforate your pets' intestines: FALSE

Just like some people, some pets naturally have weak teeth, many don't. If your pet has broken a tooth in the past it is best to assume they have weak teeth and only give them softer chews such as Himalayan Yak Chews or Paragon Chews. However, for the vast majority of pets it is better, and safer, for them to regularly chew on raw bones and age/size/breed/ability appropriate chew bones to maintain ideal dental health and to exercise their mouths and minds.

Statistically, dogs break their teeth most often on wire fences, cages, chewing rocks, other hard objects, and trauma to the face. Dogs can break their teeth on anything. Denying a dog, or cat, the chewing pleasure and dental benefit of chewing a raw bone or other appropriate chew is asking for more problems than a broken tooth such as plaque build up (which is scientifically proven to damage the heart, liver and kidneys) and anxiety that can lead to inappropriate and unsafe behaviors.

Feeding raw foods to your pet will make them more aggressive: FALSE

This would be like saying that feeding your child lean protein, veggies and fruit (dog/cat equivalent of raw) for a meal will bring out their "inner bully," while a nice big bowl of sugary cereal (dog/cat equivalent of most leading dry food brands) will lead to a calm, satisfied, focused child. You get the picture.

Raw and dehydrated pet foods are way too expensive for the average person to afford: FALSE

Whole, raw or dehydrated raw food is nutrient dense, highly bio-available and essentially filler free. In most cases you feed less. Most importantly you aren't paying for fillers and waste producing ingredients!

Even the most expensive raw foods are up to 5 times less expensive than cooked canned foods. Many Dehydrated Raw foods are only slightly more expensive than dry kibble foods. If you can only afford as little as \$10 more per month for your pets food that is still better than nothing -- just like an increase of \$10 worth of vegetables per month in your diet is better than \$10 of McDonalds or Pasta Primavera.

High protein, grain free dry food kibbles are the healthiest alternative diets for pets: FALSE

High protein, grain free kibbles are the newest pet food trend. Being touted as healthier alternatives for pets with health problems such as allergies, digestive issues, diabetes, and other health problems. While creating foods without wheat, corn, soy and excessive amounts of grains is a good thing it is not always the ideal diet for all pets. Just like people, not every pet will thrive on the same diet. Many grain free diets synthetically increase their protein contents or increase them using poorly digested vegetable products. Many pets kidneys can't tolerate these diets for two reasons. 1) the burden of the excessively high synthetic proteins 2) the difficulty of digesting cooked, processed foods.

When a kibble is cooked the protein structure is actually altered, often causing the creation of toxic carcinogens and chemicals such as the fire retardant chemical.

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What is healthy for one may not be healthy for another. We pride ourselves in helping our pet owners find the best feeding program for their individual pet. Breed, age, activity level. Disease state, metabolism, and preferences are always taken into account. Many pets have a hard time breaking cooked, processed foods into absorbable compounds before the assimilation portion of digestion has occurred. This translates to sub-optimal nutrient absorption, reduced vitality, intestinal disorders like gas and bloating, and potentially diarrhea.

Pets should not rotate their foods to prevent upset stomachs: FALSE

If your pet has only ever been fed one food it is likely that they will need to begin rotation gradually, as their digestive systems have never been challenged to function at an ideal level. Rotation, however, is an important part of a healthy gut. Every food product has different benefits and therefore also come with different deficiencies. For example, Turkey meat is high in Vitamin A, Folate, Phosphorus, and Tryptophan. Beef has no Vitamin A, is higher in protein than Turkey, and is higher in Potassium. If you didn't rotate your pets diet they will likely have excessive Potassium and deficiencies in Vitamin A if you only fed Beef. Additionally, grass fed animals have up to 400 times more Conjugated Linoleic Acid in their meat than factory fed animals. The benefits of which are known to decrease incidents of Obesity and Cancer, among other things. Ask for assistance in getting your pet on to a healthy rotation that agrees with their gut and your budget.

Grains and corn are healthy, protein adding ingredients for any pets diet: FALSE

Most corn is genetically modified and either contains high levels of pesticides or extremely carcinogenic aflatoxins. Many grains are used in the pet food industry as inexpensive bulk fillers, also minimally contributing to a pets health. The Biologic Value of corn and wheat are substantially lower than that of meats. Fish has a biological value of 92 out of 100, Beef is 78, Corn is 54 and Wheat Gluten is a poor 40. What does this mean? That feeding high levels of vegetable proteins to your dogs will make their poops bigger and their energy lower. Obviously its better for your pet and your pocket book to purchase products that are easily absorbable, minimally processed/cooked, and exclusive of cheap, unhealthy fillers.

<http://www.dogfoodadvisor.com/choosing-dog-food/judging-protein-quality/>

Meat in the first three ingredients means it's a good, healthy food: FALSE

An ingredient panel is only the first step in evaluating the status of a particular food. The SOURCING of those ingredients and the Production Quality is as important as the ingredients themselves.....for instance, if one looks at Blue Buffalo Wilderness Chicken, three of the first four ingredients are proteins, which would seem to be the ideal. However, this particular formula was recalled by Blue Buffalo due to excessive vitamin D.....(" <http://bluebuffalo.com/news/blue-news.shtml>)

Other questions to ask are "where did this chicken, beef, turkey, etc come from? Was it from healthy, clean, disease free animals?" If a food lists healthy supplementation such as berries, apples, zucchini, broccoli, it's important to know if these were the remnants of the industry...rotted, rancid and devoid of all nutrition, or were they fresh, wholesome USEFUL sources of vitamins, minerals and fiber.



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Natural pet foods that don't contain corn, wheat, soy, chicken, etc are safer and healthier than any other kibble foods: FALSE

It's important to consider the company and their history before determining that it is a good product. There are many products that have "good ingredients" and exclude wheat, corn, soy, and chicken but still have a history of recalls and unsafe manufacturing practices and/or questionable sourcing such as Diamond products (Taste of the Wild, Nature's Domain, Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover's Soul, etc <http://diamondpetrecall.com/>), Wellness, Natura (Innova, Evo, Karma), Blue Buffalo, etc. No matter what food you are feeding you can regularly check www.fda.gov, www.truthaboutpetfood.com, and www.dogfoodadvisor.com for information about recalls and vaccinations. Ask us for more information about specific companies.

Pet foods that contain glucosamine and chondroitin have sufficient levels to support your pets joint health: FALSE

The ideal level of supplementation for a 50 lb dog is 2,600mg of Glucosamine and 1,000mg of Chondroitin per day. The food we found with the highest levels of Glucosamine and Chondroitin had levels low enough that you would have to feed a 50lb dog nearly double the calories they should receive in a day to meet the minimum requirements of a therapeutic level of joint supplementation. It is important to supplement your pet with a joint supplement or raw cartilaginous product such as raw turkey necks or trachea. Pets should also be supplemented with joint care products from birth, not waiting until after they have developed an issue. In nature, pets would consume cartilaginous tissues (naturally occurring glucosamine and chondroitin) with every meal, urinating out whatever their body doesn't use. To not supplement from a young age is to deprive them of the natural building blocks their bodies need to support their joints as they grow older.

Prescription pet foods contain regulated pharmaceutical drugs that assist your pet through health conditions: FALSE

The DEA (drug enforcement agency) is responsible for the regulation of any and all pharmaceutical drugs in the USA. The DEA does not regulate any pet foods because no "prescription" pet foods contain any pharmaceutical drugs. It is believed that veterinarians are influenced by academic departments and professional associations that rely upon funding from pet food companies. For example, Hill's Pet Nutrition, makers of Science Diet and a range of prescription-only food, is a major sponsor of the American Veterinary Medical Association. Another common belief is that veterinarians lack adequate education on raw diets or nutrition in general because their college nutrition class is actually taught by, and/or the manuals are written by, Science Diet. Frequently, veterinary schools receive nutrition training that is sponsored or directly provided to students by pet food manufacturers. The Wall Street Journal reports that Hill's "spends hundreds of thousands of dollars a year funding university research and nutrition courses at every one of the 27 U.S. veterinary colleges" and that vets profit as much as 40% from sales of Science Diet and other foods sold from their offices. "Prescription" is an unregulated word in the pet food industry and is a cornered market by the companies with the most money. Their health claims are based on "scientific research", which is grueling, inhumane animal testing "scientifically proving" that nutritional deficiencies caused by poor ingredients in pet foods can be "covered up" by adding ingredients, such as salt, that falsely adjust your pets issues.

^ [Natural Remedies For Dogs And Cats] p.18-19. C. J. Puotinen, 1999. McGraw-Hill Professional. ISBN 0-87983-827-2
 ^ Convention sponsors: partners in practice Susan C. Kahler, JAVMA online, April 1, 2004
 ^ a b c Mieszkowski, Katharine. "The Beef Over Pet Food". Salon.com.
<http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2006/01/19/raw/index.html>. Retrieved 2006-03-07.
 ^ Who We Are Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc. Company Overview



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