



Some Like It

RAW

By Rob Hyde

When the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) spoke out on raw feed for animals in August 2012, many in the canine community feared it might sound the death knell for alternative dog nutrition.

Back then, an ever-increasing amount of dog owners was swapping kibble or canned food for a wholly raw diet. These raw diets included fresh or frozen patties (commercial raw) or

Common sense is a sound form of protection...

uncooked meat, vegetables and fruits, bones, supplements and added grains (home-prepared raw).

In a clearly worded statement, the AVMA, which today represents over 89,000 veterinarians across the USA, announced it was against feeding source proteins to all types of dogs.

It said: "Several studies reported in peer-reviewed scientific journals have demonstrated that raw or undercooked animal-source protein may be contaminated with a variety of pathogenic organisms."

"Cats and dogs may develop foodborne illness after being fed animal-source protein contaminated with these organisms if adequate steps are not taken to eliminate pathogens."

Instead of a raw diet, the AVMA advised that dog owners should give their pets either home-cooked or commercially prepared food. For many dog owners struggling under time constraints, however, adding to their cooking workload is an unattractive option. For others, commercially prepared food is simply not as healthy as a raw diet when it comes to a dog's health, regardless

of what animal health organizations say. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the startling difference in opinion expressed in 2016 between dog owners and the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP).

Here, 61% of dog owners deemed low/no-grain diets healthier for dogs, but only 25% of vets agreed. And on the issue of raw diets, 35% of owners thought they were a healthier form of

nutrition for dogs, compared to just 15% of vets. Some raw diet experts believe it is a lack of education that deters dog owners from switching to raw diets.

Terri Montigny, community relations & marketing manager of PetPeople, says it's all about helping dog owners find their way.

"We host raw feeding events several times throughout the year and carry a variety of products to help dog owners choose what's right for them. Most find that supplementing dry kibble with a dehydrated raw product is an easy way to give their dogs a more primal diet."

Her views are shared by Jennifer Baker, co-owner of the Grateful Dog Bakery in North Ridgeville.

"More education is needed about the importance of a species-appropriate diet for both dogs and cats. People are becoming more educated about pet nutrition, and with both human and pet obesity sky rocketing in recent years, they are looking for better choices for their pets."

Jennifer and her husband and co-owner, Karl, have three Golden Retrievers, a

Retriever/Chesapeake Bay mix and a Poodle puppy. All are now on a daily one raw meal/one kibble meal diet, which includes commercial frozen raw supplemented with raw eggs and goat's milk.

"Because of their raw diets our older dogs lost weight. Now their coats are soft and shiny. Their dental health is great and energy levels are very high. Stools are also firm, much smaller and less frequent than before starting the raw," said Baker.

But do all improvements to dogs' coats, teeth, stool and energy levels justify the alleged health risks that raw diets pose to dogs, as well as the young and elderly who may have substandard immune systems? After all, back in 2012, the AVMA did not hold back in describing how raw diets had been found to contain harmful pathogens (salmonella, E. Coli) to both humans and canines.

For Baker, common sense is a sound form of protection, leaving owners free to enjoy the benefits that raw diets bring to their dog-raising experience.

"A healthy dog with a normal immune system is not at risk for salmonella infection. People can be at risk if they don't practice good food safety. Wash your hands, wash your dishes and utensils. Don't let the dog lick your face. Prevention is really the same as for any pet food, since kibble can also be contaminated with salmonella or E. Coli."

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