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If Your Vet Suddenly Warns You Away from Raw Pet Food, Here's Why

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By Dr. Becker

Despite a large-scale public outcry against the AVMA-proposed policy discouraging raw diets for cats and dogs, it was absolutely no surprise to learn the resolution was passed by the AVMA House of Delegates (HOD) during a vote held on August 3, 2012.

Before the HOD voted on the full resolution, they first voted to include or exclude two amendments to the original proposal. One amendment changed the sentence, "Never feed inadequately treated animal-source protein to cats and dogs" to "Avoid feeding inadequately treated animal-source protein to cats and dogs."

The HOD voted to include that amendment.

The second amendment added the following entire paragraph to the original proposal:

"The AVMA recognizes that some people prefer to feed raw or undercooked animal-source protein to their pets. The AVMA recommends that veterinarians inform pet owners of potential risks and educate them on how to best mitigate the risk of pathogen exposure in both handling the food and in managing pets consuming undercooked or raw animal-source protein diets."

Those in favor of this amendment hoped it would encourage veterinarians to serve clients without facing conflict with AVMA policy. Those who opposed the amendment felt it weakened the policy because "...the policy is based on sound evidence that there is risk."

The HOD voted not to include this paragraph in the final resolution.

Purported Reason for New Policy Doesn't Hold Water

According to PetfoodIndustry.com, the reason for the AVMA's anti-raw policy is as follows:

"The association is discouraging pet owners from feeding raw meat diets because pathogens like Salmonella, E. coli and other bacteria can be easily transmitted to humans by handling the raw food or through contact with the animal's feces. Dr. Ashley Hughes of Friendship Hospital for Animals says bacteria is very difficult to get rid of, even with proper washing of bowls and utensils. She says feeding raw food is especially dangerous in homes with children, elderly people or people with weak immune systems."

As you might expect, many people are asking the AVMA what the difference is between handling raw food for pets and raw food for humans. Most families eat at least some meals at home each week that are prepared from raw ingredients, including meat.

What's the difference between preparing raw ground beef to barbeque on the grill, and preparing raw food for the family cat or dog? Why are there no policies discouraging humans from handling raw food purchased at the grocery store?

If "...bacteria is very difficult to get rid of, even with proper washing of bowls and utensils," as claimed by Dr. Hughes, why aren't millions of people across the globe being made ill all day, every day from preparing meals for themselves and their families?

The implication that raw pet food is somehow more dangerous than raw food intended for humans has absolutely no basis in fact.

The AVMA's contention their new anti-raw policy is based on "sound evidence of risk" just doesn't pass the smell test.

"To date, raw pet foods have not been associated with salmonellosis in humans. "

"To date," of course, covers decades of raw feeding of pets.

Interestingly, one of the six studies cited by the AVMA in their anti-raw policy seems to argue *against* the dangers of raw pet food diets.

Published in 2006 and titled *Human Health Implications of Salmonella-Contaminated Natural Pet Treats and Raw Pet Food¹*, the study makes the following points (bolded phrases and notes in parentheses are mine):

"The increasing popularity of raw food diets for companion animals is another potential pet-associated source of Salmonella organisms; however, no confirmed cases of human salmonellosis have been associated with these diets."

"To date, there have been no published reports of salmonellosis occurring in dogs as a result of exposure to natural pet treats." (This immediately brings to mind the tragic, ongoing problem with non-natural, processed chicken jerky pet treats from China.)

"To date, there has been only one published report of salmonellosis occurring in cats as a result of exposure to raw food diets. Septicemic salmonellosis was diagnosed in 2 cats that underwent necropsy at the College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Georgia (Athens, GA)."

"To date, raw pet foods have not been associated with salmonellosis in humans; however, identification of Salmonella contaminated food and Salmonella shedding by pets that have been fed raw food diets should raise concern."

Pet owners have been feeding raw diets to their dogs and cats for decades, yet to date, not one documented case of raw pet food causing illness in humans has been reported. Not one.

Now, how many processed pet food recalls have occurred in recent years for various contaminants, including salmonella? So many I've lost count.

If you're already successfully feeding your pet a raw diet, I hope you (and your vet) will disregard the AVMA's new anti-raw resolution and continue to offer your dog or cat real, fresh, living foods.

If you're interesting in feeding raw or learning more about it, there are many informative videos and articles here at Mercola Healthy Pets. This is a good place to start: [The Completely Healthy 'Pet' Food Your Vet Probably Vilifies.](#)

[+] Sources and References