

Raw Diets for Dogs and Cats

The AVMA recognizes public interest in feeding raw diets to dogs and cats. However, the AVMA discourages feeding any raw or undercooked animal-sourced protein (e.g., meat, poultry, fish, egg, milk*) to dogs and cats because of their risk to human and animal health. The AVMA supports the production and feeding of diets that have been processed using methods that reduce or eliminate the risk of illness due to pathogenic contaminants.

Pasteurization or cooking until the product containing the animal-sourced protein reaches a safe minimum internal temperature adequate to reduce or eliminate pathogenic organisms have been the traditional methods used to reduce or eliminate pathogens in animal-sourced protein. However, the AVMA recognizes that other scientifically validated technologies can also reduce the risk of human and animal illness due to pathogenic contaminants.

Animal-sourced proteins of concern include beef, pork, poultry, fish, and other meat from domesticated or wild animals, as well as milk* and eggs. Several studies reported in peer-reviewed scientific journals and product recalls have demonstrated that raw or undercooked animal-sourced protein may be contaminated with a variety of pathogenic organisms, including *Salmonella* spp, *Campylobacter* spp, *Clostridium* spp, *Escherichia coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and *Enterotoxigenic Staphylococcus aureus*. Dogs and cats may develop foodborne illness after being fed animal-sourced protein contaminated with the organisms listed above if adequate steps are not taken to reduce or eliminate pathogens. Apparently healthy dogs and cats can develop subclinical infections with these organisms and pose a risk to other animals and people, especially young, elderly, pregnant, and immunocompromised individuals. People handling contaminated raw pet foods are also at risk of becoming sick.

To mitigate public health risks associated with feeding pets, the AVMA recommends following the AVMA resource on Safe Handling of Pet Foods and Pet Treats.

*This recommendation does not preclude the feeding of unpasteurized, same-species milk to nursing young (i.e. puppies, kittens).