



My Client Is Feeding Their Pet a Raw Meat Diet. Are There Any Concerns for the Family?

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Raw meat-based diets (RMBDs) can be homemade (eg, biologically appropriate raw food diet) or available commercially. Commercial RMBDs are typically frozen or freeze-dried, but some are available as fresh, refrigerated products, and others can look like regular dry food (eg, diets with a raw meat coating); there is also a variety of raw-dried or freeze-dried treats. When a client mentions feeding a RMBD, consider the following:

In General

- ▶ There are no scientific studies supporting the health benefits claimed by RMBD proponents.
 - Numerous studies have shown potential health risks: nutritional imbalances, potential ingestion of bones, diet-induced hyperthyroidism, and bacterial infection.^{1,2}
 - RMBD and raw animal-based treats have an inherent risk for bacterial contamination, with *Salmonella* spp contamination rates between 20% to 48% for RMBDs.³⁻⁸

- Other bacteria identified in RMBDs include *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, *Campylobacter* spp, and *Listeria* spp.^{6,9}
- ▶ Raw food-associated infections in pets have been diagnosed, and pet-treat-associated salmonellosis in humans has been reported.¹⁰⁻¹⁶
- ▶ It may be prudent to consider the potential for public health risk.
 - Consider reports of disease in humans and animals—along with potentially high rates of pathogens (eg, *Salmonella* spp) in the feces of pets fed RMBDs.
 - ▶ Methods to eliminate or reduce pathogens (eg, irradiation, high-pressure pasteurization) are available and have been used by some manufacturers.
 - Irradiation should eliminate some pathogen risk, whereas high-pressure pasteurization may eliminate or reduce bacterial burdens.
 - ▶ Clinicians should collect a detailed diet history for all patients at every visit—including pet food, treats, table food,

rawhides, dietary supplements, and foods used to administer medications.

- This is also important for the client's health.

Human Health

- ▶ For the physician, if a patient has signs compatible with infectious disease, the types of pets or animals in contact with the patient, as well as their diets, should be discussed.
 - This can help to identify potential sources of infection.
- ▶ Although infection can occur from any pet food, it is more likely to occur when owners feed RMBDs or treats.

Note: Dr. Weese is editor in chief of *Clinician's Brief*.

See page 98 for references.

RMBD = raw meat-based diet

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