

THE BATTLE FOR YOUR PET'S DIET

by
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The food revolution from the last few decades didn't just happen for humans. It also happened for our pets. We've moved from pet food that was cheap and convenient to intentionally searching out the way food meets the nutritional needs of animals. Just as we now take a closer look at what we are feeding ourselves, the foods we feed our pets have also come under greater scrutiny.

FOOD FUR LIFE

The biggest change in pet food is the desire to feed animals properly based on their species and breed, rather than providing only what is cheap and available. While there are many inexpensive pet foods packed with fillers and additives on the market, the trend toward nutritious, scientifically sound

diets for our animal friends is a welcome change. But along with the in-depth look at what is really the right food for our pets has come the conversation about raw versus cooked food.

ARE BOTH SIDES RIGHT?

Whether you choose a raw diet for Fido or a conventional one, both have benefits and drawbacks. The raw camp believes that it's important to know exactly what your pet is eating, with the emphasis on raw or lightly cooked meat including organ meat and bones. A variety of fruits, vegetables, and dairy may also be included. But while raw-food enthusiasts tout the benefits, including healthier skin, coat, and teeth—plus smaller stools and a pet with greater energy—those against the diet point out the downfalls. Bacteria in raw meat

and the threat of choking on bones are just some of the reasons given. Further criticism exists because of the belief that in the long-term, raw-food diets don't provide the right ratios of nutrients that animals need. For example, the wrong balance of calcium and phosphorous can result in bone issues and dental problems.

On the other hand, raw-food enthusiasts point out that pet food manufacturers are permitted to use meat and grains that are rejected by the USDA for human consumption. There has been confusion in both camps when it comes to meat.

Only the phrase "USDA-certified meat" assures that you aren't getting rejected carcasses or animals that may be medicated—in other words—meat that is not fit for human consumption. While the words "USA meat" or "meat from a USDA facility" may sound good, they aren't a guarantee that the meat has gone through testing

and quality control on many levels. And both sides scream "E. coli" and "Salmonella!" Studies have found these types of bacterial contamination in both commercially processed food and raw food. So, what's a pet parent to do? First, talk with your vet. Regardless of how you choose to feed your pet, avoid products that contain chemical preservatives, anonymous meat ingredients, and artificial coloring agents. ■



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SUPPLEMENT THIS!

Animals can't always get what they need from food. That makes supplementation important. Essential fatty acids (EFAs) are especially imperative. Here are a few tips to help you provide your dog with the highest-quality, most effective EFAs supplements:

- **For a healthy coat and skin,** look for a blend of organic essential omega-6s for dogs with a full spectrum of nutrients from flax seed, pumpkin seed, sunflower seed, and sesame seed oils.

- **For brain, eyes, and heart,** choose an omega-3 supplement derived from North Atlantic salmon. Check the label to ensure the supplement also contains phospholipids and bioactive peptides—critical nutrients you won't find in ordinary fish oil products.