Hare Today

PREMIUM QUALITY

When only the BEST will do
for our Domesticated Carnivores!

From our Home to Yours

Your Guide to RAW FEEDING

What is a Raw diet?

Raw feeding is the practice of feeding domestic dogs, cats, and other carnivores a diet of uncooked meat, edible bones, and organs.

Why should I feed a RAW diet?

A raw diet provides a range of benefits that a commercial diet can never hope to even closely match.
These benefits include:

- No pet odor
- Meaty bones will help clean teeth
- Much fewer stools produced
- Decreased or non-existent vet bills (your animals are healthier!)

Why is commercial food not good for my dog or cat?

There is a range of problems with commercial dog and cat foods.

The truth about most commercial dog and cat foods is that they are loaded with additives and harmful chemicals that harm your dog or cat over time.
Many dogs and cats are suffering from many elements that can be avoided when the right food is fed to them.

The Pet Food Industry is a Multi-Billion Dollar Industry Driven By Greed
It's designed to glean profits at our dog's and cats' expense.
What else goes into commercial pet food:

- Dead zoo animals
- Euthanized pets from the pound (with poisons still in them)
- Roadkill
- Dead, dying, diseased, and cancerous cattle from feed lots
- Dead horses
- Skin, hide, feathers
- Anything else they can't turn into human food

Well then, why do so many people still feed their dogs and cats commercial foods?

Commercial pet food companies have got the advertising part down amazingly well. They have entered the market at every point. With some companies, breeders and vets get major discounts and kickbacks for selling their products. They sponsor dog shows, advertise in dog magazines, and they get high-profile people (including vets) to talk about their product. They use fancy packaging.
And most importantly, their advertising campaigns are slick, and tend to make people feel guilty if they feed any other way.
Raw feeding is about feeding a dog as close to Mother Nature's model as possible. Dogs have a DNA that is 99.8% identical to that of gray wolves.
More info on raw diets:

- Why feed a species-appropriate raw diet?
- rawfed.com/myths/index.html

How to Transition and Where to Start

Do your Homework and review the information on our Resources page if you have health-related concerns, while always consulting with your trusted Veterinarian, preferably a Holistic Vet.

- You know your Dog(s) best and I always suggest Starting a Raw Food Journal
  - A journal can help keep track of the weight of your dog, the date proteins are started, bowel movements, etc.
- Determine where you will be feeding and keep in mind safe handling techniques, more information is provided below under "Handling Raw Food" and "Cleaning".
- Picky dogs are created, a little tough love can go a long way when it comes to meal time for dogs in particular.
  - Tips for helping to entice dogs at meal time: Warming meat a bit with a warm water bath can be helpful, make sure the meat is in a sealed container and place the container in warm water. This brings out the natural juices of the meat and helps to entice them to eat. NEVER cook bones or microwave. The freshness of meat helps too, 1-2 days in the fridge.

When you first start your dog on raw, introduce one protein source at a time. Carefully select one protein with a higher bone content, this will help keep stools firm during the transition. I go into more detail on this in the Questions and Answers below.

Fast your dog for 12 hours so all kibble has been eliminated from the stomach and start on raw.

- Every pet will transition a bit differently and it can take anywhere from 1 to 6 weeks typically to fully transition to a raw diet. I have been successful with the cold turkey approach, fasting as mentioned above, and carefully selecting one protein at a time, but some animals require a more slow and more steady approach.
- If digestive issues present themselves, transition slow and steady, replacing a small portion of the normal diet with raw and see how that goes. Then, gradually increase raw and decrease the previous diet over time.

Stools are good indicators of diet.
Red meat can cause dark brown stools. When incorporating more red meats into your dog's diet, expect the stool to become darker in color.
Also, multiple meals containing a lot of blood can result in black stool. Excess blood from the diet oxidizes in the colon, resulting in very dark stool.
White chalking stool or very hard stools can be an indicator of **too much bone in the diet** and on the contrary **loose stools** can be an indicator of **too much secreting organ** in the diet. What do we mean by *secreting* organs? Check out the information here.

If your dog has very hard stools on a regular basis, look to increase fluid intake and gauge the amount of bone in the diet. Fiber can be helpful to regulate stools.
Here is our 6-month-old Lab on a fully raw diet, eating her first whole prey including fur and all. Adding fur to a carnivore's raw diet can be beneficial in so many ways:

1. It is a good source of fiber and aids in the cleaning of the digestive tract
2. When the digestive tract is clean, it can improve nutrient absorption and can support the immune system
3. Fur can help eliminate worms and parasites
4. Added fiber can help bulk stool and naturally assist in expressing anal glands

Before jumping into whole prey, make sure the raw diet is well established, ensuring a low pH, or highly acidic stomach which is important for our Domesticated Carnivores because digestive enzymes work best in an acidic environment and the acidic nature of the stomach helps to sterilize pathogens and bacteria. This is also important to break down bones.
Remember that urine pH levels should be around 6-6.5 for healthy dogs and pH levels can occur naturally at this level when fed a prey model diet.

Feeding Puppies

Feeding puppies is just as easy as feeding large dogs... I start puppies off at 2%-3% of their expected adult body weight. Puppies up to 6 months should be fed 3 meals per day. 6 months -1 year 2 meals. Over 1 year 1 meal a day. Some people choose to feed adult dogs 2 meals a day which is fine but no nutritional reason to do so unless dealing with specific health issues where more frequent feedings may be needed.

Quick links to help you with your Dog's Raw Diet:

- Ice cube trays can be extremely helpful in portioning out small dog meals or for adding variety. For example, I like to add our Ground Beef Gullet to ice cube trays so I can quickly add it to meals. Beef Gullet has known anti-inflammatory properties, believed to ease the symptoms of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. One standard ice cube is ~1 oz. Check out these trays as well which hold 3-4 oz. of raw meat per cube.
- Pyrex 3-cup storage rectangular dishes provide a tight seal, keeping meat fresh, longer, and are safe to use in the refrigerator and freezer. Each dish holds approximately 20 oz. of raw meat.
- This Pet Feeder, with an ice pack included, makes feeding while you are away a little bit easier. Each tray can hold up to 300 ml. or roughly 10 oz.

Below are the basic guidelines for raw feeding:

- At least 80% of a raw diet should consist of muscle meat.
- 10% diet edible bone
- 10% of the diet secreting organs [liver, kidney, spleen, etc] with 5% of the organs being liver.

Review this resource to help with ratio calculations:
https://Hare Today.com/raw_food_ratio_calculator

You should NEVER feed any type of cooked bone to your dog!
Cooking softens the bone tissue and can lead to bone splinters puncturing the digestive tract.

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Additional Feeding Information

Vitamins and Supplements: Cats need some basic supplements. Dogs do not if fed a good variety. The only supplement I have ever fed my dogs is either salmon oil or sardine/anchovy oil [also good for cats] as this is high in Omega 3 fatty acids and great for the skin and coat.

If you have a dog with mobility issues, recovering from an injury or an aging dog I also recommend the green-lipped muscle powder.

How much to feed: On average, a dog will consume around 2% of its ideal weight. Puppies will need more, senior dogs less. **Feed calculator** here.

A note on bacteria: Raw meat is not safe for humans because of bacteria like e-coli and Salmonella. But carnivores' digestive systems have some natural immunity to bacteria, and can handle the bacteria in meat without issue, when in good overall health. Truth be told, bacteria is everywhere (take a sample of kibble and have it analyzed sometime, you would be amazed!) Dogs eat poop, road kill and lick their behinds every day. Their system is different from ours. If we ate the stuff they did, WE would get sick. Dogs have a short digestive system made to handle raw meat and bones, the bacteria that is present isn't a problem for a healthy dog.

Handling Raw Food

Follow safe handling practices just the same as you do when preparing meat for your family.

Fridge time: 2-3 days
Freezer time: If a freezer stays at 0 F or lower, meats will keep for a 1-year minimum
Defrosting: Do not defrost frozen meat and poultry products at room temperature.

Keeping the products cold during defrosting is the key to preventing bacteria from growing.

Thaw in the fridge. I find it is easier to open the chub bags while frozen by cutting down the side and putting the frozen meat in a bowl to thaw. You want to feed the blood as well.

To defrost meat or poultry products in cold water, do not remove the original packaging. Be sure the package is airtight or put it into a leak-proof bag before submerging the product completely in cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes so that it continues to defrost.

Cleaning

Wash hands thoroughly in hot, soapy water before and after handling meat and other fresh foods.

Wash all utensils, cutting surfaces, and counters with hot, soapy water after contact with meat and poultry. If possible, use a separate cutting board for fresh meat and poultry products.

Keep fresh meat and meat juices away from other foods, both in the refrigerator and during preparation.

Understanding the Digestive System of our Domesticated Carnivores: Why pH matters.

Where does Digestion start for our Domesticated Carnivores?

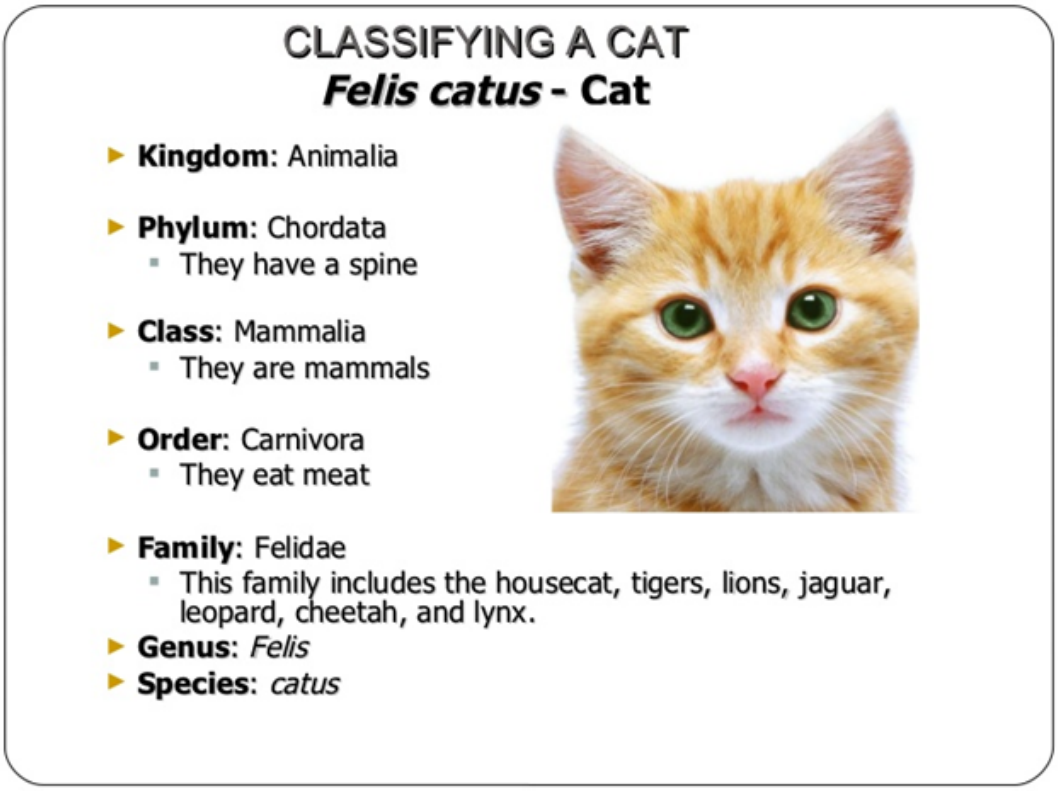
Before jumping into the physical components of the digestive system, I believe it is important to start with the foundation that our dogs are essentially wolves as their DNA is 99.8% identical to a gray wolf.

Comparing house cats to tigers, for example, their DNA is 95.6% the same and you may be surprised by how alike our domesticated cats are to their large cat cousins. * *https://feline-nutrition.org/one-page-guides/cats-are-cats

Let's check out how our Domesticated Carnivores (Dogs, Cats, and Ferrets) are classified:

- Starting from the top, dogs, cats, and ferrets are found within the Animal kingdom, and (as you know) they are further classified as a Mammals
- The Mammal order is then specified as Carnivora, meaning "a mammal who eats meat". --> Check out your Carnivora's teeth and claws adapted for catching and eating other animals!
- Next, Carnivora is broken out in families which are based on similar features
  - The Canidae family would include domestic dogs, wolfs, foxes, etc.
  - The Feliforms family would be your cats, domestic and wild
  - The Mustelidae family would include weasels, badgers, otters, and ferrets
- Genus then links closely related animals with very similar features
  - The genus Canis for example would include the following species:
    - Familiarity, domestic dog
    - Lupus, the gray wolf
    - Latrans, coyote
  - The genus Faludi would include:
    - Panfara; tigers, leopards, jaguars, lions
    - Puma; panthers and cougars
    - Felid, small wild and domestic cats
  - The genus Mustela would include:
    - Putorius, ferret, or the domesticated European polecat
    - Altaica, mountain weasel

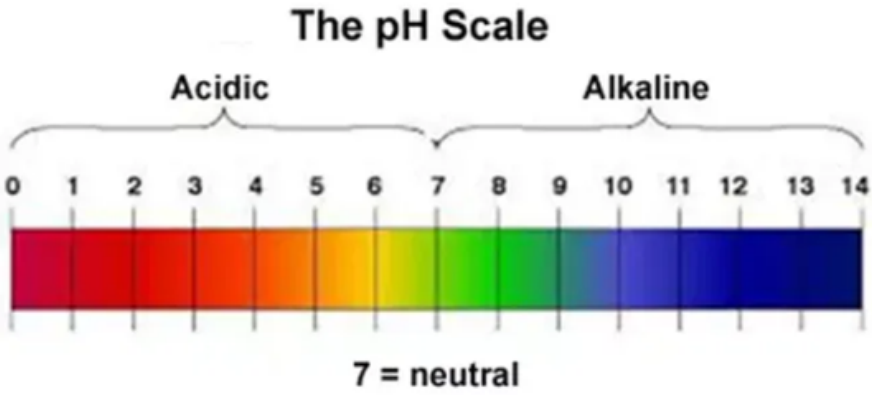
Here is the classification of a cat to illustrate:



Referring back to how animals are classified can be fundamentally important when considering diet and understanding the digestive system. So now that we have our foundation, let's dive a bit deeper.

Have you ever heard that pH is very important?

Starting with a definition, Wikipedia defines pH as "a scale used to specify how acidic or basic a water-based solution is. Acidic solutions have a lower pH, basic solutions have a higher pH. At room temperature, pure water is neither acidic nor basic and has a pH of 7."



Reputable source links:

Within the blog here is more information regarding the importance of pH for felines, in particular.

"The carnivore stomach is not only a sterilizing chamber, due to the low pH (high acid content – HCL) but it is also the initial site of protein digestion, primarily by pepsin – secreted by the epithelial lining of the stomach

God designed the dog's stomach acids to be much stronger than ours and they are designed for digesting large lumps of meat and even good size pieces of RAW bone. The ability of the carnivore stomach to secrete hydrochloric acid is exceptional. Carnivores are able to keep their gastric pH down around 1-2 even with food present. This is to facilitate protein breakdown and to kill the abundant dangerous bacteria often found in decaying flesh foods."

So now that you understand why pH is important, let's talk about how pH is balanced in the stomach to properly digest a species-appropriate diet.

From my Raw Food Specialist course for Canines, I've learned that Hydrogen and Chloride are secreted into the stomach where they form Hydrochloric acid. *Hydrochloric acid keeps the pH of the stomach around 2.0*and the acidic environment kills most harmful bacteria.

Also, Pepsinogen is converted into the proteolytic enzyme Pepsin. Pepsin is active at a pH between 1-2 and its job is to break down the peptide bonds in amino acids which is the start of protein digestion.

Consider Thiamine (B1) levels in the diet. Thiamin is a big part of energy metabolism and B1 is involved in making hydrochloric acid. Dietary sugar is known to deplete Thiamin.

Thiamin deficiency will affect the ability of digestion, which can anorexia, cataract, heart disease, polyneuritis, and depression.

Thiamin-rich foods include fish, lean pork, venison, and liver.

Now, how quickly the stomach empties depend on a few factors. Water and watery foods empty faster than solid foods. While carbohydrates empty faster than proteins and proteins are emptied faster than fats. Emptying is delayed when the pH of the stomach is alkaline or high in pH. Everything slows down.

Articles on Mixing Raw and Kibble (must reads):
https://feline-nutrition.org/nutrition/raw-meat-and-kibble-dont-mix
https://therawfeedingcommunity.com/2018/01/29/gastric-ph-in-raw-kibble-fed-dogs/

There is so much more to the digestive system and pH and the stomach are two primary components I will share more as time allows.

Remember, you are your pet's biggest advocate and I encourage you to keep pressing the boundaries of your knowledge and understanding as diet can have a big health impact on their lives, as well as yours.

Yours truly,
Ashlee Luke, owner of Hare Today

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