

# Candidate for Raw?

The Skinny on raw food diets.

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## CONSIDER BEFORE YOU GO RAW

- Very young and very old dogs may not be the best candidates.
- Dogs with a compromised immune system should have a vet exam before going raw.
- Families with young children should take extra safety precautions in the handling, storage and serving of raw meals (and post dinner kisses from Fido).
- If you still plan to feed some kibble, don't feed it in the same meal as raw food.
- Practical considerations include the higher cost of raw food, freezer space required and your own schedule. For some, raw may be inconvenient to defrost and serve.
- If you sometimes leave your dog with someone else, make sure they are comfortable feeding raw, or plan ahead for gradual transitions between raw and cooked foods.

**T**here are many factors to consider in choosing whether to move to a raw food diet for Fido. Different vets have different opinions, and online forums and other resources contain a mind-boggling amount of information and opinions on the merits and pitfalls of food choices. Here's a simple set of considerations to help you make the choice.

ble sources along with safe, proper handling and storage are also essential to risk reduction.

Some raw diets contain whole bones. Avid raw feeders often include whole animals such as chickens or rabbits in their feeding protocols. There is a chance that bone shards can cause medical complica-

## AS FIDO'S GUARDIAN, YOU NEED TO BE COMFORTABLE AND CONFIDENT IN FEEDING HIM FRESH RAW FOOD.

### Pros and Cons of Raw

Raw pet food can contain many of the same contaminants that may be present in raw meat and fish that people eat. Bacteria such as e-Coli and Salmonella are most effectively destroyed by cooking. For that reason, many experts believe the safest solution is to feed only cooked foods to pets.

However, from a physiological standpoint, Fido has a shorter gastrointestinal tract than his human counterparts. This means that a raw diet can pass through much more quickly, thus reducing the time in which any harmful bacteria could multiply. This allows Fido to excrete the bacteria before it reaches harmful levels. Choosing meat from reputa-

tions with this type of feeding. As raw food diets have gained popularity, the incidence of veterinary procedures to remove bones from the GI tract has also increased. When swallowed, whole, raw bones or bone shards can obstruct the intestines, cause constipation, lodge in the roof of the mouth and break the teeth in extreme cases. For this reason, a commercially prepared raw diet or an investment in a high-powered food grinder are wiser choices.

Many pet owners who do feed a raw diet, however, report improved skin and coat condition, cleaner teeth, fresher breath, improved resistance to disease and parasites and fewer allergies.

### Pros and Cons of Cooked

Cooking, especially canning and extrusion, which involve very high pressure and extreme heat, can make foods less nutritious. High heat destroys many enzymes and antioxidants. Cooking at high temperatures can also alter the molecular structure and amino acid profiles of food ingredients. Some studies have suggested that cooking under high heat and pressure can also result in the formation of cancer-causing compounds in foods that would otherwise be healthy.

Kibbled diets (those produced by extrusion) are also linked with bloat—the debilitating and often life-threatening condition that affects thousands of dogs in the U.S. every year. There is some indication that raw-fed dogs do not seem to get bloat, at least not with the same frequency as those who eat kibble.

Many cooked diets contain an abundance of grains and these can increase the incidence of allergy-based health problems, such as itching, ear infections and GI upset.

At the end of the day, you—as Fido's guardian—need to be comfortable and confident in feeding him fresh raw food (whether commercial or home prepared). But with a little research and a gradual transition, raw food can be a wonderful alternative for many dogs. **fi**

BE SURE TO CONSULT YOUR VETERINARIAN BEFORE CHANGING FIDO'S DIET.  
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