

Raw Food Diet for Dogs and Cats presents: Starting a Prey Model Raw Diet

First, read *The Basics* for an overview of the raw diet. Then check out the *Getting Started* section for how to start your pet on a raw diet.

The Basics – What do I feed, how often, and how much?

- How much to feed: Feed 2-3% of the adult cat or dog's ideal body weight, and adjust up or down according to the dog's body weight. Puppies should be fed 10% of their current weight until the amount fed per day meets or exceeds 2-3% of their expected adult body weight. Example: if a puppy weighs 10 lbs and should weigh 85 lbs as an adult, then you would feed 10% of the current weight, or 1 lb per day. 3% of 85 lbs is about 2.5 lbs, so you would increase the puppy's food as he grows until he is eating about 2.lbs a day. **Amounts for adults and puppies/kittens should always be adjusted based on body condition. This is just a general guideline**
- How often to feed: Puppies can be weaned to raw around 4 weeks. Feed young puppies 4-5 times/day. Puppies at 3-4 months should be fed 3 times a day. Puppies 6 months and older can be fed 2 times a day. Adult dogs 1 year and older can be fed once or twice a day, depending on what works for that particular dog. If your adult dog is getting bile pukes on 1 meal, you may need to feed twice a day. Also varying the time of day that your dog is fed can help avoid bile pukes.
- What to feed: Prey model raw is 80% meat, 10% bone, and 10% organ.
Note that when first switching, you'll probably be feeding more than 10% bone to keep stools firm. See the Getting Started section Half of the organ should be liver and half should be other organs, although it is acceptable to feed just liver. Grains are a no no, and fruits and veggies are not fed in prey model raw as carnivores do not need them and are not equipped to digest them. If you wish to feed a BARF model diet with fruits/veggies, please join a BARF group and discuss it there. We do not advocate grains, fruits, or veggies in this group.
 - Meat = muscle meat. In raw feeding, heart, gizzards, lung, trachea, tongue, penis, and tripe are all fed as meat.
 - Organs: liver, kidney, spleen, brain, thymus, pancreas, testicles, eyes
 - Bones: Any bones from small animals are fine, such as chicken, duck, goose, lamb, turkey, goat, pig, rabbit, etc.

- Don't forget the fat! Dogs use fat for energy, not carbs. Dogs need 15-25% fat with their meat, depending on the dog's metabolism, energy level, etc. You may need to add fat when feeding a lot of lean meat like poultry, lamb, or heart. Too much at once or increasing too soon will cause loose stools. Increase fat slowly and only to bowel tolerance.
 - The 80/10/10 ratio is a general guideline. Some dogs and cats may need more or less bone than 10%. Watch the poop and adjust as needed.
 - Meats to avoid: wild boar, horse, bobcat, and bear can carry a parasite that can not be killed by freezing and are not recommended. It is also not recommended to feed animals closely related to dogs like fox or coyote, or other carnivores. Fresh fish from the Pacific Northwest and wild game should be frozen for about a month to kill parasites.
 - Variety: more is better. Feed at least 4 different proteins to ensure your pet will get everything they need. Red meat should predominate the diet for dogs. Pork counts as a red meat.
 - **Enhancements in meat:** This is often overlooked, but meats with added sodium and enhancements should be avoided as they cause loose stools in *many* dogs. Check labels – unless it is organic, most grocery store meats are enhanced or have added sodium. Look for enhancements, sodium, retained water, broth, flavorings on the label.
- Safety considerations
 - Do not feed weight-bearing bones of large animals like cows, moose, elk, deer, emu, ostrich, kangaroo, etc. These bones are meant to support a great weight and are hard enough to break teeth. Also avoid oddly shaped or cut bones (like t-bones or chops), which are sharp and could cause damage to the esophagus/stomach/intestines. Bones from older mature turkeys, like turkey legs found in the store, tend to be dense and can splinter.
 - KNOW THY DOG!! Supervise your pet while eating. When switching, observe your dog while eating. If your dog tends to gulp their food down quickly without at least chomping on it a few times, then do not feed small items that can be swallowed whole, or freeze them together in a hunk and feed them that way so they have to chew.
 - Check enhancement and sodium levels in your meats. Avoid enhancements, and make sure sodium levels are below 100 mg/4 oz serving. Note that some pets can't even tolerate this much sodium.

Getting Started

- SLOW AND STEADY!! Don't be in a hurry to introduce organs/new proteins. The 80/10/10 ratio applies to dogs and cat already established on a raw diet. Raw is about balance over time. Your pet will eventually get what they need. Focus on getting your pet adjusted to the new diet, and worry about the ratio once they are established on 4 proteins and organs.
- Start with one protein at a time, and don't add organ right away. This will allow your pet to adjust to their new diet, and can aid in determining if your pet has an allergy/intolerance to a protein. Chicken is a good place to start as it is easy to digest and the bones are very soft. **Protein allergies in kibble don't always translate to an allergy in raw, so you may be able to feed raw chicken to a dog that cant handle it in kibble** If in doubt, start with something else like duck or turkey.
- WATCH THE POOP!! Monitoring bowel movements is how you know how your dog is responding to the diet and how you know how to adjust what you are feeding. You will be a poop expert soon! Loose stools generally means not enough bone, too much of something rich, like organ, fatty meats, or heart, or a protein intolerance. Hard, white, or chalky stools means too much bones. Mucousy stools may mean too much fat.
- No need to wean the dog or cat to raw. Switch puppies or kittens over cold turkey. For adult dogs/cats, feed kibble one day, fast for about 12 hours, then start with a small raw meal.
- Although we eventually want the 80/10/10 ratio, we start with more bone to keep stools firm while they adjust.
- **Introducing protein # 1:** Chicken leg quarters or half/whole chickens are a great place to start for most dogs. For cats/small breeds, try chicken thighs, bone in breasts, or buy leg quarters, cut the drumstick and thigh apart, and alternate between thighs and drumsticks. You may remove the skin for the first few days to avoid loose stools, then start leaving it on. If your pet has trouble with bones, try smacking them with a hammer to break them up a bit. You can also cut some slices in the meat so they can grab it easily. Feed only chicken for the first week, and don't add the second protein until you have a week's worth of solid poops. If you have loose stools, increase the bone until stools are firm but not hard or white and crumbly. Again, don't forget to check to make sure the meat has no enhancements or added broths or solutions, and sodium should be under 100 mg/4 oz serving, and many dogs need 65 mg/serving or less.
- **Adding additional proteins:** choose a second protein, such as turkey, duck, rabbit, or pork (leaner cuts of pork are better to start – pork can be fatty and

too much fat too soon can cause cannon butt). Add in small amounts of the second protein to the first one until your pet is tolerating an entire meal of the second protein with solid poops. Again, wait about a week with solid poops before introducing more proteins. It's generally a good idea to add in beef later, as it is very calorie dense and also will likely be boneless. Most beef bones are too dense to feed.

- **Introducing organs:** organs can cause loose stools, so start with very small amounts and work your way up. Some pets will be able to eventually eat their week's worth of organs with a bony meal in one day, and some may need smaller amounts of organ more frequently. You will learn what your pet needs by watching the poops. Start with a very small amount of liver, then gradually increase. Do the same with other organs. If your pet is resistant to eating organs: try feeding them frozen, grind or chop them and mix them with something else, pan sear them (less and less each time) and let cool, sprinkle them with parmesan cheese, smear them with some ground tripe. If all else fails, try tough love.

Supplements

- Get your pet established on a raw diet of at least 4 proteins and organs **before** worrying about supplements. Young puppies do not need supplements, and added oils in puppies can interfere with absorption.
- Unless feeding mostly wild-caught meats, you will need to supplement with a high quality fish oil (free from soy or other ingredients) to make up for the lack of omega 3 fatty acids in farmed meats. Too much oil from any source can interfere with absorption – more is not better.
- Things I add: kelp powder, which rich in iodine and is a good source of folic acid, vit K, magnesium, calcium, iron, and other trace elements and minerals; alfalfa powder, which contains trace, dietary fiber, and vitamins A, B1, B12, C, D, E, and K. 1 or 2 shakes from a salt shaker over the food twice a week, a little goes a long way. Use kelp with caution or not at all in dogs with thyroid issues.
- Supplements other than fish oil are optional. If you are feeding a balanced raw diet of at least 4 different proteins, your pet should be getting everything they need. Fad supplements like coconut oil are not needed.

Help!!

- My dog won't eat raw: If your dog is otherwise healthy and an adult, tough love is your best approach. Present the meal, but walk away but keep an eye on them for safety. If they don't eat within 10 minutes, put the meal in the fridge and give the dog nothing else until the next meal. Present it again. If they still won't eat, put it away again. Healthy adult dogs will NOT starve themselves. They can go days without food without ill effect. Do not use tough love with cats. See the cat section below.
- My dog won't eat turkey/chicken/whatever protein: See above
- My dog won't eat liver/other organs: Liver and other organs are a necessary part of the diet and can't be left out. Some things to try: feed them frozen, sear the outside quickly in a hot pan and let cool (searing them less and less each time with the goal of the dog eventually eating them raw), hide them in other meats, grind them and mix with something they like, sprinkle them with parmesan cheese, disguise them with green tripe. If they still won't eat them – tough love. They eat the organs before they get anything else.
- My dog is gulping down his food and I'm afraid he'll choke: This is another case of Know Thy Dog. If your dog is gulping down things without chomping/chewing them at all, feed either large pieces that are the size of the dog's head, or freeze smaller things together in a hunk and feed it frozen. Be careful with things like necks, which are a great shape to plug the trachea, and wings, which are an odd shape and could get stuck.

Ahhh, Cannon Butt!!!

There are many possible causes of loose stools. If your pet has truly liquid uncontrollable diarrhea and increasing the bone/decreasing fat temporarily doesn't help, see your vet. Here are some possible causes of loose stools.

- **Too much sodium/enhancements – get enhancement-free meat and look for meats with low/no added sodium. The limit is 100 mg/4 oz serving. Some dogs cant even handle 65 mg/4 oz serving.** This is a very common and overlooked cause of loose stools in raw feeding. If your dog has loose stools, the first thing to do is check the sodium content and for the presence of enhancements. Most meat from the grocery store is enhanced. If in doubt, try a different source for that protein before assuming your dog has an issue with the particular protein – it is more likely to be a problem with sodium or enhancements in the meat.
- Not enough bone – increase the bone content

- Too much fat at once – split fatty meats or added fat into different meals.
- Overfeeding – decrease the amount or split into multiple meals
- Too much organ/liver at once – feed organs with a bony meal like necks or backs. Split the weekly amount of organ into multiple meals or feed a little with every meal if necessary
- Too much “rich” meat like heart – feed heart meat with a bony meal or feed smaller amounts at a time rather than a whole meal of heart

Considerations for Cats

Cats can be tricky to switch. Like most things involving cats, you will need patience and a sense of humor.

- You can't tough love a cat! Cats that are forced to go without food for a prolonged period of time (sometimes as little as a day or 2) can develop hepatic lipidosis. This can be life threatening.
- Cats are fed similarly to dogs – they need about the same 80/10/10 ratio as dogs.
- Cats often need a little less bone than dogs. They do need fat too.
- Kittens can be weaned to raw. No need to grind their food, just give them pieces appropriate to their size. Start with soft bones like chicken ribs or day old chicks, or break up bones with a hammer if needed until the kitten learns to chew the bones.
- Cats can't handle spoiled meat. Dogs who are established on raw can generally handle meat that has been in the fridge too long or smells a tad off. Cats cannot. Make sure their food is fresh, and don't let it sit out all day.
- Cats need taurine. This is found in the greatest quantities in dark meats and heart meat. Either feed plenty of these or supplement with taurine. Grinding meat reduces the bioavailability of taurine, so if you are feeding ground meat to your cat, you will probably need to supplement.
- You switch a cat in essentially the same way as a dog. Chicken thighs are a great place to start. You can remove the skin and bash the bone to help them get started. Start by cutting it into pieces, then gradually give bigger pieces until they'll eat it whole.
- Tips for switching picky kitties:
 - If the cat is free fed kibble, switch them to regular mealtimes. You can also try switching to canned cat food, then to raw.
 - Allow the food to come to room temperature or warm it up in a bowl of warm water (do not microwave it or cook anything with bone).
 - Drizzle the raw with tuna juice

- Smear a little canned food on the raw or mix the raw in with the canned food.
- Sprinkle with a little grated parmesan cheese
- Crumble some dried liver over the raw
- Crush a few pieces of kibble and sprinkle it over the raw
- Smash some canned sardines and mix it with the raw
- Mix it with some homemade meat broth
- Give it a quick sear and let it cool, searing it less and less each time until the cat will eat raw.
- Try a different protein.
- “Accidently” drop it on the floor and let the cat think they stole something great
- Mix tiny amounts of raw into canned food, slowly increasing the amount of raw and decreasing the amount of canned.
- If bones are the problem, try very soft ones like chicken ribs, Cornish game hens, small rabbits, quail, mice, day old chicks, small fish, guinea pigs, hamsters, rats
- For the most stubborn kitties, sometimes they just need to learn that raw is actually food. Place a small dish of raw next to the cat’s dish of kibble or canned food, or place a piece in their bowl with the food. Eventually, the cat should associate the raw with mealtimes and the food he is already eating. If you have a dog or another cat that will eat raw, feed these pieces of raw to them so they don’t go bad or go to waste.

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