**PRESS RELEASE** 

# 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024

# PETS FED RAW MEAT FOODS ARE A

# WALKING



Just like us, pets that eat raw meats can get food poisoning and, just like us, most that are infected do not show any signs of sickness. However, these pets are often shedding harmful organisms in their motions which spread to their coat, mouths and their environment (e.g gardens, parks). Infectious agents, such as Salmonella will be shed within just one day and for up 11 days, avian flu can survive 4 weeks and others much longer (e,g, Toxoplasma oocysts).

Food-borne pathogens transmissible from pets to humans include Salmonella, Campylobacter, STEC *E.coli*, Listeria, Toxoplasma, Tuberculosis (TB) and Avian flu.

Whilst serious disease and fatalities are rare, they do occur and the most vulnerable people are **young children**, the elderly, anyone with a poor immune system due to disease or medications (e.g. steroids or chemotherapeutic agents) and pregnant women.

To reduce the risks to people and animals, responsible raw-feeding owners, could:

- 1. Not allow vulnerable people to come into direct contact with their companion or its environment
- 2. Never allow their pet to lick the face especially babies and young children
- 3. Advise vulnerable people who are in contact with the pet to wash their hands thoroughly after stroking, before touching face, handling or eating food

- 4. Never take the pet to locations where high risk people will be present especially: maternity wards, nurseries, child care centres, primary schools, playground areas, hospital wards, hospices, care homes, residential homes for the elderly.
- 5. If a high risk person lives at the same address consider cooking the meat (as you would for yourself) before feeding to your pet
- 6. If you can afford it, have your pet's motions tested regularly (say every 2 months) by genomic methods for its microbiome, and this will tell you ALL the organism present, including the bad guys. Although this is really hi-tech it costs less than £160.

# END

#### Released by Provet Limited in the interests of Public and Animal Health

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#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Outbreaks in humans linked to contact with pets fed raw meat foods, not necessarily contact with the raw food itself, have been reported: Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) resulting in haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS) and acute kidney failure – including a human fatality in the UK, Salmonellosis, Campylobacter (113 cases across 17 states in the US – from stroking infected puppies), Avian flu (a Vet who handled a cat that died in an outbreak in the US)

Also of concern is the potential for Listeriosis and other diseases such as Brucellosis, especially as we import meat from all over the world.

Whilst members of the Public are generally aware that they should wash hands and surfaces after handling raw meats, few are aware that if they feed raw meat to their pet it can be asymptomatic but still shed the organism, resulting in contamination of its coat, high levels of pathogens in its mouth (over 30% of dogs fed raw in the UK were found to have multiple drug resistant *E,coli* in their oral cavity) and contamination of the environment.

Manufacturers of raw pet foods are meant to test their products for pathogens, especially Salmonella before placing them on the market however they do not seem to be doing so as, according to the Animal and Plant Health Agency, during 2022 "there were 406 reports of Salmonella from raw meat pet food, a significant increase from 295 reports in 2021. There were 123 isolations of regulated serovars from raw meat pet food in 2022 an increase of 73.2% compared with 2021 (71 isolations) and almost double the number of isolations in 2020 (62 isolations)"

Consumer confidence in the safety of these products is currently being boosted by what, in my opinion, is an ill-conceived campaign called "RawSafe". This is being supported by a group of Veterinary Surgeons. This campaign is disingenuous to say the least as the truth is that feeding raw meats can NEVER be safe unless it is treated, for example by cooking, to kill pathogens.

Main concerns are the apparent lack of compliance with health standards by the industry, and that nobody is currently advising owners about the risks that raw-fed pets present to high-risk people (young children, the elderly, immunocompromised people and pregnant women) who may come into contact with it or it's environment. Despite efforts to stop the practice, I know that raw fed pets are still being allowed onto hospital wards and into care homes, both of which are full of highly vulnerable people. I myself am now a high risk person and even though I have always been a small animal orientated Vet, I now no longer allow myself to stroke or be licked by a dog or a cat until I am sure that it is not fed raw meat. What a sad state of affairs !

#### **PROVET ADVICE**

#### 1. TO PET OWNERS FEEDING RAW MEAT FOODS

To reduce the risks to people and animals, responsible raw-feeding owners, could:

1.Do not allow vulnerable people to come into direct contact with your companion or its environment

2.Never allow your pet to lick the face – especially babies and young children 3.Advise vulnerable people who are in contact with your pet to wash their hands thoroughly after stroking, before touching their face, or handling or eating food 4.Never take your pet to locations where high risk people will be present especially: maternity wards, nurseries, child care centres, primary schools, playground areas, hospital wards, hospices, care homes, residential homes for the elderly. 5. If a high risk person lives at the same address consider cooking the meat (as you

5. If a high risk person lives at the same address consider cooking the meat (as you would for yourself) before feeding to your pet

6.If you can afford it, have your pet's motions tested regularly (say every 2 months) by genomic methods and this will tell you ALL the organism present, including the bad guys. Although this is really hi-tech it costs less than £160.

7. Take legal advice about your potential liability if someone develops a serious disease, or dies after direct or indirect contact with your pet or its environment

#### 2. ADVICE TO RAW PET FOOD MANUFACTURERS

To reduce the health risks for animals and humans

- 1. Only source meats from suppliers with the highest hygiene standards from slaughter through handling, storage and transportation.
- 2. Avoid using imported meats unless traceability and hygiene standards can be assured
- 3. Test all meats for pathogenic contamination.
- 4. Ensure the highest hygiene standards during your company's handling, processing, packaging and storage on your premises, and transportation from your premises
- 5. Test every batch effectively to ensure compliance with the law in relation to the levels of Enterobacteriaceae and Salmonella, but also conduct genomic analysis to look for other pathogens that may be present. This costs less than £160 per test
- 6. Take legal advice about your potential liability if someone develops a serious disease, or dies after direct or indirect contact with your products

#### 3. ADVICE TO VETERINARY PRACTICES

# a. If you advise your clients not to feed raw meat foods, but they do not take your advice, advise them

1.Not to allow vulnerable people to come into direct contact with their companion or its environment

2.Never allow their pet to lick the face – especially babies and young children 3.To advise vulnerable people who are in contact with their pet to wash their hands thoroughly after stroking, before touching their face, or handling or eating food 4.Never take their pet to locations where high risk people will be present especially: maternity wards, nurseries, child care centres, primary schools, playground areas, hospital wards, hospices, care homes, residential homes for the elderly.

5. If a high risk person lives at the same address consider cooking the meat (as they would for themselves) before feeding to their pet

6.If they can afford it, to have their pet's motions tested regularly (say every 2 months) by genomic methods for the microbiome and this will tell them ALL the organism present, including the bad guys. Although this is really hi-tech it costs less than £160.
7. Advise that they should take legal advice about their potential liability if someone develops a serious disease, or dies after direct or indirect contact with their pet or its environment

#### b. If you are a Vet who advises your clients to feed raw meat foods:

- 1. Review the scientific evidence to support your recommendation
- 2. Check with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons that your endorsement of feeding raw meat foods is not in breach of the Guide to Professional Conduct.
- 3. Provide your clients with education about the steps they can take to reduce the health risks of this practice (see above)
- 4. Take legal advice about your potential liability if someone develops a serious disease, or dies after direct or indirect contact with a pet or its environment, following your recommend to the owner to feed raw meat.

#### 4. ADVICE TO GOVERNMENT

1, Provide advice to consumers about the risks associated with feeding raw meat foods, and steps they can take to reduce the health risks to animals and humans (as above).

2. Take action to prevent raw-fed pets being taken into public spaces were high risk people will be a risk especially maternity wards, nurseries, child care centres, primary schools, playground areas, hospital wards, hospices, care homes, residential homes for the elderly.

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In August 2017, 4 cases infected with genetically related strains of STEC O157 was identified. The strains possessed the stx2a toxin subtype, a toxin type known to be associated with more severe disease and the development of Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS), a serious complication of this infection, predominantly affecting the kidneys. One case died following development of HUS. Public Health England will not confirm whether the death was one of the three children involved. Three of the cases had been exposed to dogs fed on a commercial raw meat based diet, one fed raw tripe.

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Of 576 pet food samples analysed - 66 samples (11.5%) were positive for Listeria (32 (5.55% or more than 1/20) of those were Listeria monocytogenes) and 15 samples positive for Salmonella – ALL in raw foods or jerky treats

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## SEE FDA PET FOOD RECALLS – MANY ARE DUE TO THE PRESENCE OF PATHOGENIC LISTERIA MONOCYTOGENES

https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/safety-health/recalls-withdrawals

#### **MYCOBACTERIUM BOVIS (TB)**

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The 3 cats in this report had never been outside the house and developed confirmed TB. Source not confirmed but they were fed RAW food

4. Conor O'Halloran et al. Tuberculosis due to Mycobacterium bovis in pet cats associated with feeding a commercial raw food diet. Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery, 2019. DOI: 10.1177/1098612X19848455 In this report 83 cats were confirmed with TB from eating a raw wild venison diet that was recalled. At this time Four owners and one veterinary surgeon were found to have high likelihood of latent tuberculosis infection. One owner required treatment.



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#### **AVIAN INFLUENZA**

H5N1 was first discovered in domestic and wild cats in Asia,[4] specifically in 2003 in the Thai zoo where two tigers and two leopards died. In 2004, the Thai zoo had 147 tigers that died or were euthanized.[5] This was then followed by an outbreak in Germany in 2006, where three stray cats were found to be either dying or dead during the peak time of the virus outbreak.[6] Currently, as of June 2023, there is an ongoing outbreak in Poland with at least 9 confirmed cases and multiple deaths. [7]

1. CDC Reported outbreak of avian flu in shelter cats. A vet handling one of the cats contracted the infection.



https://archive.cdc.gov/#/details?url=https://www.cdc.gov/flu/spotlights/avianinfluenza-cats.htm

2. ECDC REPORT In this report giving advice to cat owners regarding a recent outbreak of avian flu in cats in Poland the possibility that the cats may have been infected from eating contaminated raw food is not mentioned – even though that is the most documented cause. https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/communicabledisease-threats-report-week-26-2023.pdf

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