

*The paragraphs below are the introduction to an article authored by four ACVN Diplomates and published in the December 1, 2013 issue of the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA). A link to the full article follows.*

**Current knowledge about the risks and benefits of raw meat-based diets for dogs and cats** – Lisa M. Freeman, DVM, PhD, DACVN; Marjorie L. Chandler, DVM, MS, DACVN; Beth A. Hamper, DVM, PhD, DACVN; Lisa P. Weeth, DVM, DACVN

The feeding of RMBDs to dogs and cats has received increasing attention in recent years. The American Animal Hospital Association, AVMA, and Canadian Veterinary Medical Association have adopted statements discouraging the inclusion of raw or undercooked animal-source protein in dog and cat diets. The Delta Society's Pet Partners Program expressed concern that pets in the therapy animal program could be shedding pathogens in the presence of immunocompromised humans and other at-risk populations. Therefore, they adopted in 2010 a policy that precludes animals that eat RMBDs from participating in their therapy animal program. For each of the organizations, the primary reason indicated to oppose feeding of an RMBD was that potential pathogen contamination of the uncooked meat causes health risks to the pet fed the diet as well as to other pets, human family members, and members of the public in contact with the pet. These statements did not address other potential problems of RMBDs, such as potential nutritional imbalances or other safety issues of the diets (eg, feeding bones); they also did not address the reasons people want to feed these diets or potential benefits of this type of diet.

A major problem in the discussion about potential risks and benefits of RMBD is the paucity of good data from high-quality studies. Information on nutritional risk or benefit is often from low-quality studies (testimonials, case series, or poor-quality cohort and case-controlled studies). The evidence for infectious disease risks when feeding RMBDs is of better quality and quantity, but few studies have been conducted to compare the risk of feeding RMBDs with that of feeding commercial foods, and no studies have been conducted to evaluate long-term risks and benefits of feeding RMBDs. The lack of consensus and paucity of good data can make it difficult for veterinarians to provide informed feeding recommendations to dog and cat owners.

The intent of the information reported here is to provide a balanced review of the issue of feeding RMBDs, types of RMBDs, reasons these diets are fed, and potential benefits and risks associated with feeding of RMBDs. The information will also highlight areas in which additional research is needed to better delineate benefits and risks.

*Here is a link to the December 1, 2013 JAVMA issue on the AVMA website. Free access has been provided to the full text of this article found on page 1549 in the section of the Journal entitled "Veterinary Medicine Today - Timely Topics in Nutrition":*

<http://avmajournals.avma.org/toc/javma/243/11>