

The Skinny On Pet Diets: Common myths and facts

Myth: Raw diets are better for my pet because it mimics their diet in the wild.

Fact: There is no scientific evidence that feeding a raw vs. a conventional diet is any more beneficial to an animal's health. However there is a lot of evidence that it is not. These diets have also generated controversy due to their increased risk for microbial contamination, i.e. Salmonella. Feeding a raw diet means potentially spreading harmful bacteria every time your pet gives you kisses or licks his paws and walks around the house. There is also risk of gastrointestinal problems and/or injury from bones in the diet, and the possibility of an unbalanced raw diet causing nutritional deficiencies resulting in illness.

Myth: Grain free diets are better because they don't contain fillers and will not cause allergic reactions in my pet.

Fact: The source of issues faced by patients with allergies is their own immune system. Basically, their immune system overreacts to specific triggers, such as flea bites, poultry, or types of grass. Every pet has a different immune system, therefore every pet reacts differently to potential allergens. If your pet has not shown any signs of allergies before, then grain-free food is likely a waste of the extra money it costs to buy. For those pets that have been proven to be sensitive to certain ingredients through food trials, the ingredient should obviously be avoided. Otherwise grains remain a cost-efficient, quality nutrient source for pet foods and should not be feared by pet owners.

Myth: Dry kibble is better for my pet's teeth

Fact: Dry foods can certainly provide better cleaning action on teeth than wet food. However, there are several important factors to consider beyond the food being simply wet or dry. The nutrients in the food itself is a very important factor in managing dental disease. Breed, age, chewing pattern, and a healthy immune system are all factors that must be taken into consideration. Only pet foods with a seal of acceptance from the Veterinary Oral Health Council [VOHC] have been shown to aid in oral health.

Myth: Homemade diets are nutritionally better and healthier for my pet.

Fact: Unless properly formulated by a nutritionist, diets made at home are not likely to be nutritionally complete and balanced. The nutritional quality of any diet depends on how the recipe was formulated, the nutrient content of the ingredients, and how the owner prepares the diet. Homemade diets may also contain contaminants and food-borne microbes if the owner is not careful when making their pet's food. Federally regulated, commercially prepared foods have processing methods and quality assurance programs that limit the potential of food-borne illnesses in pets. They also offer the benefit of board certified veterinary nutritionists creating the recipes and put forth millions of dollars in research and development for quality, balanced nutrition.

Myth: Neutering will make my dog gain weight or become obese.

Fact: In some dogs and cats, metabolism slows down after neutering. This means their body requires less energy to function and therefore requires less food to function. However, most owners continue to feed their pet the same food, and the same amount of food as before neutering. So, shortly after the surgery, the pet is consuming more calories than are required to maintain a healthy body weight. Yes, there is a relationship between neutering and obesity, but if feeding instructions after the surgery are modified to reduce caloric intake, obesity can be avoided.

Resources:

[Ohio State University Veterinay Medical Center](#)
[Veterinary Partner](#)