

Your Urban Carnivore

**THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO FEEDING
YOUR PET A RAW FOOD DIET**

BRENDA HAGEL

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This book is intended as a layman's reference guide to navigating the concept of feeding your pet, understanding some basic health concepts, and learning how it all fits nicely into a program of feeding your pet an evolutionary diet. The medical and/or nutritional information in this book is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your veterinarian or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding your pet's health.

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FORWARD

This all came about as a result of answering countless phone calls, letters, and emails, and attempting to share my limited knowledge of feeding raw before it became mainstream. It was startling to me how many owners of sick pets were searching for answers. Over a period of several years, I researched just about every possible chronic disease associated with cats and dogs. It revealed a predictable pattern of declining health.

This pattern inspired me to save all my responses, emails, letters, and related research. Over several years, I was amazed at the bank of information I had stored. I never bothered to footnote or record my references because most of the information was provided as an opinion and a service to help guide people through the darkness of their pet's ill health. There was never any thought of a book.

Regardless, I acknowledge the value of the information. It gave me the drive to organize it and present it in an easy-to-read book for the everyday pet owner who seeks basic information. Some might discredit it as unauthoritative. However, for you and me who deal with our beautiful pets on a day-to-day and hour-to-hour basis, it is highly valuable. It does not prescribe, predict, or take away from the necessary care of your veterinarian. It is simply a guide on how to care for our pets better. It provides some basic nutritional background and some detail on how to commence feeding your pet to help give them the healthiest, longest life possible. Of course, there is the added benefit of saving money on professional health care, but that's secondary compared to the enjoyment a healthy pet brings during the time you have together.

I'm grateful for the help of a couple of people who are the true pioneers of raw feeding in the world. I thank them for their patience, tolerance, and willingness to answer my myriad of questions. Thank you to Dr. Ian Billinghurst, B.V.Sc.(Hons), B.Sc.Agr., Dip. Ed. and Dr. Meg Smart, DVM, PhD. I consider them my friends. Without them, the raw pet food industry would not exist. I am forever grateful for their willingness to share their knowledge, and for their fortitude to never give up. Thank you to Becky Macintosh from Coyote Communications Inc., Sue Beattie from Akanami Pet Health, and David Hagel for their tireless work and dedication to what seemed like an endless project.

I am proud of my work and believe this book will serve as a long-term reference guide. It isn't necessary to read it in one sitting. Keep it on the shelf and let it be your go-to reference during the different stages of your pet's life. I hope it serves you as well.

Brenda

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1

A Species Appropriate™ Diet is the Foundation of Your Pet's Health

Proper nutrition forms the foundation of your pet's health, and as a pet owner you will invest thousands of dollars feeding your dog or cat over its lifetime. Most pet owners assume that the food they purchase for their animals will provide a healthy and balanced diet, an assumption most often based on information received from veterinarians and/or gleaned from pet food packaging and advertisements. Yet domestic dogs and cats have more diseases now than ever before, and the primary reason lies in the foods they are fed.

Most commercially available pet foods are heat processed. These foods were developed approximately 80 years ago and designed for the primary purpose of saving the owner pet food preparation time. However, since the advent of these products, veterinarians have observed and documented significant negative changes in the health of companion pets. Inadequate nutrition resulting from improper diet can be implicated in a wide range of disorders including obesity, food intolerance, inflammatory bowel disease, chronic ear infections, cystitis (bladder inflammation), bladder and kidney stones, heart diseases, pancreatitis, hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism, hip dysplasia, cancer, bloat, skin issues, and diabetes. Consequently, it is critical that caregivers become aware of what they are feeding to their pets, and how their animal's health responds to its diet.

The food put into a pet's bowl each day has the effect to heal or harm.

The question of what to feed and not feed pets is far from simple. Store shelves offer a continual onslaught of pet foods, each promising superior qualities and results. The consumer's task of discerning marketing truths from marketing myths has become increasingly difficult. Pet owners are faced with not only with a large number of product choices, but accompanying claims which may or may not be true.

The pet food industry is a multi-billion-dollar business. Pet owners are the targets of sophisticated and clever marketing campaigns. Pet food advertisements declare their messages across all media including the Internet, television and radio, and almost every type of magazine (certainly including those available, often free, in veterinary clinics and pet supply stores). A further dimension of this industry's influence is exerted in the institutions where animal care professionals are trained. Pet food companies, many of which are owned by "junk food" conglomerates, contribute millions of dollars in financial assistance to major universities and institutions that conduct pet food nutrition research and/or train veterinarians. Consequently, student veterinarians are often taught animal nutrition on the basis of a specific pet food company's own "prescription" foods. Unfortunately for the pet owner, these vets-in-training receive little to no education on pet nutrition that is based on foods other than dry (kibble) or canned pet foods. We would argue that for this reason, their education is, at the very least, inadequate and biased.

UNDERSTANDING BIOLOGICAL ADAPTATION

Holistic veterinarians are generally aware of the importance of a Species Appropriate™ diet to pet health. Conventional veterinarians generally take the view that cats are carnivores and dogs are omnivores but both can have good health on grain-based diets. ***They hold these beliefs in spite of scientific proof that neither dogs nor cats have evolved a physiological requirement for carbohydrates.*** Of the 80 million species on earth, all thrive on raw fresh food, except humans and domestic pets.

Understanding the term *biological adaptation* is key to understanding the basis of sound nutrition for your pet. To explain the concept simply: the optimal diet that herbivores (cattle, rabbits, horses, and sheep, to name but a few) are physically equipped to handle is comprised exclusively of raw leaves and grasses. Granivores (primarily birds) best thrive on the raw grains of various grasses. Carnivores (wild cats, wolves, and coyotes, for example) are physically designed to eat primarily raw meat. Omnivores (including humans, dogs, bears, and pigs) are able to eat both plant and animal matter for their nutritional needs. The foods to which a species is biologically adapted are those deemed "natural" to its character. These dietary requirements determine the features of the animal (for example, the shape of their teeth or the arrangement of their digestive system). Basically, what this means is that each class of animal will thrive on the diet best suited to them, as decided by its biological heritage over millions of years of evolution. This is biological adaptation, and it should be the guiding principle for all nutritional decisions you make for your pet during its lifetime.

Dogs and cats, like all other creatures in nature, are inherently provided with the physiology required to maintain their own optimal health. This too is biological adaptation, and species throughout nature intuitively limit themselves to the foods to which they are specifically adapted. ***We can conclude that, in order to live in an optimal healthy state, animals should consume the diets to which they are naturally physiologically adapted.*** Pets today may appear to have acquired a taste for the processed products of pet food manufacturers but the reality is that these foods are both relatively new and also implicated in a wide variety of pet health problems. In the selection of a diet most harmonious with your pet's physiology, canine and feline anatomies must be considered in the context of their original and natural diets. To sum up: domestication does not alter dogs' and cats' essential biological adaptations, internal makeup, or natural needs. The only "expert" that should be relied upon to decide which foods are best is the animal's own body, because it is anatomy and physiology that decree whether any particular food is either appropriate or detrimental to health. Pet food decisions should not be based on the messages and claims of modern marketing.

If we want our pets to enjoy the best possible health throughout their lives, we must begin by recognizing and respecting their original natural adaptations and biological heritage. We would never expect cattle or horses to thrive on anything except green feed, as this is their natural adaptation. The same principle of biological adaptation holds true with dogs and cats. Food must be suited to the body to avoid complete physiological breakdown. While dogs and cats can be scavengers when forced, their bodies cannot, in the long term and without major health deterioration, adapt to foods that have been radically altered from their natural forms.

Clearly, in regard to domestic animals, the needs of dogs and cats are most fully and completely met so long as their biological needs are fulfilled. ***Nature conveniently provides everything that all species require to live in consummate health, and it is through feeding natural and biologically appropriate food that optimum pet health is possible.***