

What Some People Say About Feeding the Raw Diet, and how to answer them!

When you go to your vet for your puppy check-up, he or she may ask what you are feeding your Airedale puppy. I usually answer that we feed a species-appropriate diet, and if they press me, I tell them that I am feeding raw meaty bones and raw vegetables with supplements. I also tell them that the diet is not open for discussion. The best reaction that I have received was: "I wish I had the time to feed that diet." The second best was: "Several breeders in my practice are following that diet. I think I need to get more information on it." The next best was: "Well, I won't argue that dogs are designed to eat that food, but I cannot encourage feeding that diet. However, I won't argue about it with you."

The reason that I tell the vets that the diet is not open for discussion is because of the knee-jerk reactions that I have heard from a lot of people, including some vets, over the years. Although more and more vets are open to the diet today, here are some of the most common myths that we—or our puppy people—have encountered:

- **Myth:** Your dog will get bones stuck in its intestines—this is also stated as the bones will puncture your dogs intestines. Interestingly, it is amazing how many dogs these vets say they have treated: it almost seems that they must have time for nothing else. **Reality:** I did check this one out with a vet tech who told me that they cannot tell if bones are raw or cooked when they are removing them from a dog on the few occasions that they do this. I suspect that they are cooked (or sun-baked in the yard), leaving them brittle and splintery and dangerous.
- **Myth:** Your dog will get parasites from the raw meat. —**Reality:** Remember, you are feeding human grade meats. What are they telling us about the meat we routinely handle in our kitchens?
- **Myth:** Your dog will end up with e-coli or salmonella poisoning. **Reality:** This one I usually refer to the CDC ever since they stated in their press release in August 1999 that pet shop pigs ears carry salmonella that is a threat to humans but not to our dogs. Also, keep in mind that these are dogs that lick their rectums and eat poop, and guess what? Poop is full of e-coli.
- **Myth:** Your dog will wear its teeth to the nubs by the time they are two, or your dog will break his teeth. **Reality:** Then, the speaker looks in my dogs' mouths and is amazed at the glistening clean sharp teeth they see on the older ones.
- **Myth:** Your dog will become a bloodthirsty pack animal. **Reality:** Actually, there is less growling in our kitchen than when the dogs were on commercial kibbles.
- **Myth:** If this diet catches on, it will create a public health nuisance because dogs fed this diet will have more e-coli in their poop, people won't pick up after their dogs, and therefore, the larger community will be at risk. We will have to ban dogs from public parks. **Reality:** This one makes me wonder if the speaker has ever seen an analysis of poop. Regardless of the food, kibble or BARF, it is full of e-coli and even salmonella. E-coli is a natural organism associated with bowels and is mainly dangerous to people who have compromised immune systems. Of course, when handling any poop from any dog or handling raw meat and veggies, people should wash their hands!
- **Myth:** A BARF fed dog was diagnosed with cancer: the vet attributed the cancer to the raw human-grade chicken necks the dog was being fed. They said that commercially raised chickens are vaccinated in their necks with vaccines and antibiotics, so there is a

possibility of residual amounts of the vaccine remaining there. **Reality:** What does this say about vaccines? Neither vaccines or antibiotics are injected into the necks in the US.

- **Myth:** The most recent comment was that dogs have no protein need; they have an amino acid requirement and that can be met with the amino acids and enzymes in the grains in commercial foods. **Reality:** This, of course, does not take into consideration that the enzymes are quite different in grains and, of course, non-existent, in cooked commercial foods. It also does not take into consideration that the canine digestive tract cannot digest grains appropriately.

Typically, when someone says any of the above, I just smile and thank them for their advice. I do not argue, and I do not try to win them over. I also do not take them seriously. I remind myself that I am looking to that person for other advice and help that has nothing to do with diet and everything to do with what I hope is their expertise.