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## **Raw Meat Diets**

In the March 2004 issue of Veterinary Practice News, Dr. Narda Robinson has written an article entitled “Raw Meat Diets Risky for Pets, Families.” The following is a brief summary of the article.

Feeding raw meat is a hot topic in veterinary medicine. There is intensive promotion in books and on the internet. Advocates maintain that raw meat is nutritionally superior to processed foods and is “what nature intended dogs and cats to eat.” However, two recent reports of deaths of animals fed raw meat highlight the fact that animals can and do become ill from organisms in raw meat.

According to a statement by Link Welborn, DVM, president of the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), on the AAHA Web sit, “Raw-meat-based diets have become increasingly popular among pet owners who believe the diets will improve the health of their pets, despite the growing body of information showing that these diets pose a health risk not only for the pets that consume them but also to their owners.”

Risks to household members via contact with pets or cross-contamination from utensils and dishes is especially worrisome for children, seniors, and immuno-compromised individuals.

An evaluation of raw-food diets for dogs by Freeman and Michel in 2001 demonstrated that “All the [raw] diets tested had nutrient deficiencies or excesses that could cause serious health problems when used in a long-term feeding program.”

Some of the agents of infectious disease found in raw meat diets for dogs include: Campylobacter, Clostridium, E. Coli, Pseudorabies virus, Salmonella, Toxoplasma, and various tapeworms.

If you do feed a raw diet to your dog, please remember that handwashing is essential. Any children feeding the meat should receive supervision and instruction on proper food and utensil handling. Dishes require thorough disinfection and you should remove uneaten food promptly.