

# Raw Protein Diet Policy

*updated 5.19.2010*

Over the past few years, the increasing use of raw protein diets and the health concerns and controversy generated have grown, not only between the public and veterinarians, but often within the veterinary profession itself.

After careful consideration of all of the known scientific facts, and on the unanimous advice of the Delta Society Medical Advisory Board, made up of internal medicine and public health experts from North America, the board of directors voted to **preclude animals eating raw protein foods from participating in Delta Society Pet Partners program**. This will be a phased program, with **complete compliance structured to be in place by June 30, 2010**.

The following are some frequently asked questions and answers.

## **What exactly are the scientific facts?**

The use of raw animal proteins to promote animal health has not been based on proven or known scientific facts, only anecdotal incidents. On the other hand, it is well known that animals fed raw diets (BARF or other) shed significant amounts of pathogenic bacteria, which studies have indicated may put some people at risk, as compared to pets being fed commercially prepared or cooked, home-made diets.

## **What are the risks of feeding raw protein diets other than shedding... can my pet become ill?**

While many animals fed raw protein diets appear healthy, some do get ill. Even healthy animals can shed pathogenic bacteria that can affect the human companion team member and others. Certain individuals are at increased risk of disease if they encounter various pathogens, particularly people that are immune-compromised, very young or elderly. This basically describes most of the individuals Delta Society Pet Partners visit: Patients in hospitals, senior centers, nursing facilities, hospice care, rehabilitation facilities, and schools involving young children, among others.

## **How long does my pet have to be off of raw protein foods before re-starting visitations again?**

Dogs can shed for a variable amount of time. At a minimum a 4 week waiting period before visits are resumed.

## **What if my other pets eat raw protein diets?**

If a Pet Partner has access to the food or bowl used, it would be best to NOT feed any of the other pets raw meats. Inadvertent eating of raw meat or cross-contamination is very real. Any dog or cat from a household where raw protein food is fed is not eligible to be a Delta Society Pet Partner.

## **What commercial foods are being recommended instead?**

You can look for a balanced diet from any of the reputable pet-food manufacturer, preferably one labeled in accordance with the Association Of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). You should also consult with your veterinarian.

## **What if my veterinarian is fine with feeding raw protein diets?**

While your veterinarian may not believe the risk is that great for your pet, Delta Society Pet Partners teams are in contact with many individuals who are at a much higher risk for infections. Since many studies have shown pets fed such diets shed a significantly higher number of pathogenic bacteria, the risk is too great for inadvertent, but avoidable infection. Also, your veterinarian is not assuming legal responsibility for you and your pet, Delta Society is.

## **Are there home-made diets I could use instead of commercially produced brands?**

Yes there are some available recipes, but the risk of an improperly formulated and balanced diet is real. Some

sources to try: i. the [University of California, Davis](#) at (530) 752-1393. ii. Similar veterinary nutrition experts can be found on the website of the [American Academy of Veterinary Nutrition](#) (AAVN).

**What was the role of pet food manufacturers in the adoption of the Raw Protein Diet Policy?**

No pet food manufacturer representatives contacted, encouraged, lobbied, or influenced the Delta Society Medical Advisory Group in recommending to the board that they approve a Raw Protein Diet Policy.

Delta Society has always prided itself on having high standards for its Pet Partners program. As board members learned of medical professionals' concerns about the increased risk of the spread of pathogenic bacteria to humans by animals fed raw protein diets, it was determined that this was an issue that needed review. Based on input from the medical community, the Board of Directors voted to implement this new policy. As many of our Pet Partners visit in hospitals, assisted-living centers, and other places where people's immune systems are compromised, it was decided that implementing this new policy was the responsible action. For clarification, animals within the Pet Partners program are not required to be fed commercially produced food – the policy states that cooked, home-made diets are also acceptable.

**If you have any questions or concerns, please email to: [rawproteindiet@DeltaSociety.org](mailto:rawproteindiet@DeltaSociety.org) for the Delta Society Medical Advisory group to address.**