

What About Germs in a Raw Diet?

Many people are nervous about parasites and "germs" in raw meat. This is once again largely due to negative press. It is simply not true that all meat is automatically contaminated with *e.coli* and/or *salmonella* or any other type of germ. Most bacterial contaminations are directly attributable to poor handling and storage techniques. Here in our facility, we practice strict safety precautions and we are stringent about keeping sanitary working conditions. This includes maintaining clean and disinfected floors, utensils and stainless steel work surfaces, wearing gloves while handling meats, and storing meats promptly at cold temperatures. We even use environmentally-friendly cleansers and disinfectants, along with 200 degree hot water. In short, we run our kitchen as well as you run your own, never forgetting that we are responsible for the safety of the products we produce.

In addition to the safe handling practices we employ, several of our recipe ingredients do double duty as germ-fighting assistants. Honey is a well known antibacterial (did you know you can heal skin wounds with raw honey?). Apple cider vinegar is active against several types of germs and parasites. And of course garlic is famous for its antimicrobial properties!

In addition, we utilize regular internal testing on each batch produced to ensure that no *salmonella* or *e. coli* is present. The tests are made for use in human food facilities, with a zero-tolerance for any level of bacteria. If ever a batch test were to return a result other than Negative, that batch of food would be destroyed before it ever got packaged for sale. We also back up our internal testing by submitting samples to independent outside laboratories. We have never had a single positive result in nearly 10 years of producing our products.

Now, let's address the concern about the possible presence of *salmonella* and *e.coli* despite our best efforts to eradicate them. Your dog, cat, or ferret is a carnivore. Carnivores differ from humans in some important ways on the inside. Mother Nature has designed our carnivorous companions to be able to handle very high levels of "bugs" that would probably make a human very ill. Carnivores have very strong stuff in their stomachs, called hydrochloric acid (HCl). We have this same acid in our stomachs, but it is not nearly as strong (because we don't have any need for it to be that powerful). This acid can take care of just about anything, including parasites or germs that may be encountered in the food. Also, carnivores have a much shorter digestive tract, compared to ours. This means food passes through their systems much more quickly, leaving less time for bacteria to get a foothold and cause problems or illness.

Finally, it is important to remember that germs like *salmonella* and *e.coli* are everywhere around us all the time. They are part of a normal, healthy digestive system. They are routinely excreted/shed in feces (both human and animal), and

this is not cause for alarm. It is normal! They only become problematic when a person or animal with a lowered or compromised immune system comes into contact with a higher than usual concentration. Did you know that the only documented cases of people or animals becoming sick from dog food involve a dry, packaged dog food that contained *salmonella*? There have also been recalls of several dog treats, such as pig ears, again for salmonella contamination. And don't forget, dogs and cats lick their back-ends (and other body parts) routinely, as well as rolling in or even eating dead birds, rodents, fish, garbage, etc., without contracting illnesses.

As long as you use common sense when feeding a raw diet to your pet, the chances of either of you becoming ill from raw meat are extremely small. It is recommended that you use hot, soapy water to wash your hands, wash your pet's dish, and keep your counter top areas and utensils clean. Also, do not leave dishes containing raw foods "out" for any length of time. If your pet does not clean his or her dish at mealtime, either dispose of or refrigerate any leftovers promptly. Of course, if you are feeding Aunt Jeni's Home Made® pet food, there's slim chance of "leftovers!"

We hope this information has been helpful to you. We are happy to share freely all information regarding how the things we do could affect you and/or your pets. As always, we wish you and your pets the very best of health!

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