

Rupert's - A Guide to Introducing the Raw Diet

Can I change to raw food immediately?

Whilst some dogs and cats will tolerate an immediate transition from one type of feeding to another there are several reasons why we recommend a gradual transition over a 7-10 day period avoiding any unnecessary stomach upsets in your cat or dog.

- 1.** The enzymes required to break down a high protein, raw meat and bone diet are different to those required to break down a high carbohydrate processed diet (such as kibble). The pancreas has to adapt to both the amount and type of enzymes that it produces when the diet is changed from one to the other.
- 2.** The gut flora is different for dogs and cats fed on a predominantly meat and bone diet, compared with a high starch and carbohydrate based diet. It takes several weeks for the gut flora to re-stabilise following a major diet change. These gut bacteria are responsible for the production of certain key nutrients and are also responsible for the production of gas in the bowel.
- 3.** The PH of the stomach is generally higher (more alkaline) in dogs and cats that are fed on a high carbohydrate processed diet compared with dogs and cats fed on a predominantly raw meat, high protein diet, which results in a strong acid stomach.
- 4.** It is not only the process, but also the speed in which the food types are digested which also differ considerably. Raw meat and bone is digested a lot faster compared with carbohydrate processed food.

How do I make the transition?

The ideal for all dogs and cats, is that the transition is trouble free and there are no periods of excessive wind, diarrhoea or constipation. In order to achieve this, the best way to transition dogs and cats from a high carbohydrate processed diet to a low carbohydrate, high protein raw meat and bone diet, is to do a gradual phased transition over 7-10 days.

Day 1 - We recommend substituting a spoonful of kibble (or high carbohydrate, wet processed food) for a spoonful of raw diet. The spoon size will depend on the size of dog or cat, for example, a teaspoon for a toy breed dog and a tablespoon for a large dog.

Day 2 onwards - Following on from day 1, each subsequent day more of the diet should be substituted until full transition is achieved.

If your dog or cat has a loose stool at any stage, we recommend reducing the amount of raw food for three days to stabilise the stool before returning to increasing the raw food levels.

If your pet is elderly or dealing with any complex chronic disease e.g. end stage cancers, animals on antacids or high levels of immune-suppressive drug therapy, then we would not recommend you begin the transition on to a raw diet with expert help.

For the first month of feeding raw, digestive enzymes and probiotics can be added to the diet for dogs or cats that have any dietary issues or that have been prone to diarrhea or constipation.

What about introducing treats and bones?

For any dog or cat that has never eaten raw meat before, we recommend allowing a month to adjust to their new diet before introducing any additional bones. The reason for this is to allow the gut to stabilise and adapt to handling the breakdown of bone in their new raw meat and bone diet. Excessive bone in their diet can lead to constipation.

Dogs need to learn how to chew bones. When introducing a bone to an adult dog that has never learnt how to handle carcasses it is better to give a bone with sinew and fascia attached in larger pieces that cannot be swallowed whole e.g. turkey backs and play bones. The dogs learn to use their back crushing teeth to break down the bone before swallowing. We advise avoiding small chicken wings for larger dogs until they have learnt to handle bone correctly to avoid them attempting to swallow the bones whole.