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Clinical nutrition – Canine nutrition – A fistful of dog food

Introduction and Goals: The feeding RMBDs (so called raw meat-based diets) to dogs and cats reached significant popularity in the past few years in Hungary. In our study, the most common motivations of feeding RMBDs were analysed. Our main goal was to gain an insight into the common reasons of feeding this specific diet, where/when the owners learned about it, what were the most important motivations to choose RMBDs and how satisfied were they with the diet.

Results: Regarding the source of first information about nutrition, among non-RMDB feeders the most common source of advice was a veterinarian (38%), however among RMBD feeders, information came from facebook groups (34%) or “from a friend” (31%). This shows that info about raw meat-based diets reaches dog owners via non-scientific routes, meanwhile, most of the non-RMBD feeders follow diets based on scientific studies, which are advised by qualified persons. 75% of RMBD feeders put emphasise on RMBD as natural diet, which was important for only 10% of non-RMBD feeders, and 47% of mixed diet feeders. Additionally, RMBD feeders pay attention to building a proper muscle structure, weight-control, to have an exact knowledge of what they are feeding, good digestibility dental calculus prevention and improvement of hair-coat quality.

It is remarkable, that 13% of group NY claim RMBD safe, only 1 person expressed concern on infectious pathogens. The results clearly point out that most people have no information or will not take in consideration the risk of pathogens with feeding of RMBD. In the RMBD group facebook groups were the primary (82 %) and for 54 persons (13%) the only information source for the detailed diet. RMBD feeders received detailed info from acquaintance (33%), scientific articles (32%), specific product/brand pages (29%), reader/user review sites and books 26% and 23% from their vet. The non-raw feeders primarily identified the vet as a source of detailed information (53%). From the aspect of complacency there was a significant difference between the groups. 84% of RMBD users were fully satisfied with their feeding practice, while in the other groups satisfaction ranged from moderate to high.

Discussion: RMBDs lack high quality scientific studies documenting their usefulness. Owners first hear about raw diets from non-scientific sources of social network groups and friends, additionally detailed info sources are mostly the same. It is worth noting that many RMBD feeders marked scientific articles as source of information, however, the authors found very limited access to such articles. RMBDs have some advantages, however, the assessment of better hair-coat quality or overall condition are highly subjective and high satisfaction rate is greatly influenced by social network groups. The raw diet users are either unaware or are not willing to admit the increased risk of infection both of their pets and themselves. Additionally public-health risk factors, which are documented in the public domain also must be taken into account when evaluating raw diets. Since the advantages of raw diets e.g. high digestibility can be achieved by other means as well, the authors do not recommend feeding of RMBDs.

Biography

Krisztina Kungl graduated at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Poland. In the Department of Internal Medicine and Clinic of Diseases of Horses, Dogs and Cats she was responsible teacher for Companion animal clinical nutrition and fodder hygiene. She completed her PhD research on the Effects of dietary supplementation of ω 3 and ω 6 fatty acids on hair coat and skin in the healthy dog, which resulted in a worldwide patent of the formula with Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd. She currently holds a post at the Department of Clinical Pathology and Oncology, University of Veterinary Medicine, Budapest, Hungary, where she continues nutrition consultation and formulation of individualized home-made diets for dogs and cats. She is an expert in small animal clinical nutrition. Previously she was Veterinary Affairs Manager, Hill's Pet Nutrition Central and Eastern Europe with Russia, also worked for the Hungarian Food Safety Office (HFSO). In addition, she is lecturer of clinical pathology, pathophysiology and nutrition related topics of internal medicine.

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