Alternative foods

There is an abundance of unsubstantiated information regarding alternative foods for pets available to the public via the Internet and other sources. However, pet owners should be aware of the facts if they are considering an alternative food for their pet.

BARF formula (Bones And Raw Food)

- The BARF formula consists of a combination of raw meat, eggs, meaty bones and vegetables
- There is no scientific data to support beliefs commonly held by BARF supporters
- Some published BARF recipes contain excessive levels of Key Nutritional Factors such as protein, calcium and phosphorus for an adult dog or cat
- Food poisoning and bacterial contamination are obvious safety hazards for not only pets eating raw foods but the humans handling raw foods as well
- Pets eating BARF or other raw food formulas are at an increased risk for intestinal obstruction, fractured teeth and gastrointestinal perforation

Home-cooked pet meals

- In one study, 90% of homemade pet foods were found to be nutritionally unbalanced and incomplete for pets
- Pet owners and pets may be exposed to dangerous bacteria such as salmonella and listeria harboured by raw or insufficiently cooked meat
- Pet owners may assume dogs and cats require the same nutrition as humans and provide improper levels of multiple nutrients
- Homemade meals can contain an inverse calcium and phosphorus ratio dangerous to pets

A WORD ABOUT PRESERVATIVES

Preservatives are ingredients used in pet food to prevent spoilage and rancidity. Here are the facts about preservatives commonly found in commercially manufactured pet foods:

- BHA and BHT are examples of synthetic antioxidant preservatives approved by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (part of Health Canada) when used at recommended levels
- Many human foods, such as bread, cheese, margarine, potato chips, meat, and frozen and dried fruits, contain BHA and BHT
- Natural preservatives include tocopherols (vitamin E), spice extracts and citric acid