

## **New Position Statement Approved — Raw Food Diets for Pets**

The CVMA Council recently approved a new position statement on Raw Food Diets for Pets. This position statement was developed jointly by the members of the CVMA Pet Food Certification Committee and the Public Health Agency of Canada, with input from the CVMA membership through general consultation. The CVMA wishes to thank all those members who provided feedback and contributed to the development of this position.

The new position is also posted on the CVMA Web site at <http://canadianveterinarians.net> under Publications/Position Statement/CVMA General Position Statements.

### **Position:**

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) believe that there is evidence of potential health risks for pets fed raw meat based diets, and for humans in contact with such pets. Currently there is little scientific evidence supporting the efficacy of these diets. However, the documented scientific evidence of potential animal and public health risks in feeding raw meats outweigh any perceived benefits of this feeding practice. If veterinarians do recommend raw meat diets for pets under their care, they should be aware of potential liability concerns should a pet or in-contact human become ill due to pathogens originating in the diet. Veterinarians recommending raw food diets must inform pet owners of potential risks, and should educate the owners on how to mitigate risks of pathogen exposure in both handling the food and in managing pets consuming raw meat diets. It is also important for veterinarians to emphasize that there is a higher risk of human infections if pets on these diets are being used to visit human hospitals for therapeutic reasons, or if pets are fed in households with people who have compromised immune function, or where there are very young children that could come into direct contact with the food or with the feces of pets consuming raw foods.

### **Background:**

Feeding pets raw meat based diets is a recent trend. Multiple benefits of feeding these diets are touted, but all are supported only by anecdotal reports. To date, no scientific evidence to support the efficacy or safety of these diets have been published. There are now multiple peer-reviewed studies documenting potential risks from bacterial pathogens present in raw meats for both pets fed these diets, and for in-contact humans. Studies have also proven that pets fed raw meats can shed potential bacterial pathogens in their stool thereby acting as a source of potentially significant zoonotic infections to in-contact humans. The public health risks of feeding raw food are magnified with evidence that bacterial pathogens in raw foods, and in the stools of pets fed raw foods have enhanced patterns of antimicrobial resistance

References available on the CVMA Web site. Approved by the CVMA Council — November 2006.