

My focus is on how feeding commercially produced cat foods has damaged the health of my cats and how the promotion of these foods is both misleading to pet owners and detrimental to pet health.

I have two cats. Their health was damaged due to feeding them commercially produced cat food. Their health improved when their diet was changed to a carnivore appropriate raw meaty bones diet.

Cat A:

- was adopted from the RSPCA at 4-5 months of age
- is now approx 2 years old
- was raised by the RSPCA on Hills Pet Nutrition dry biscuits

Hills pet food is the staple diet fed by the RSPCA. Hills Pet Nutrition is the RSPCA's major sponsor.

At one year old Cat A was diagnosed at two different veterinary practices with dental tartar/gingivitis. On both occasions I was advised to wait until the condition had worsened enough to require a surgical clean and scale by a vet. This would have incurred considerable cost and, in isolation, would not have resolved the condition. Rather it would have formed the basis of ongoing annual management of the condition over the life of the cat - as well as providing guaranteed ongoing income for the vet.

No other options were offered. No explanation of why the problem existed was tendered.

Cat B:

- was adopted from a rescue organisation
- is now approx 18 months old
- was raised on Royal Canin kitten food as advised by both veterinarians and also the original rescue organisation

At approx 6 months of age Cat B was exhibiting dental/health problems

- two vet practices and four examining vets later the default for treatment remained repeated and ineffective prescriptions of antibiotics
- no diagnosis, other treatment or testing was offered
- in desperation I consulted a third vet and was referred to SASH Small Animal Specialist Hospital
- SASH performed extensive testing and determined Cat B was suffering from Feline Gingivostomatitis.

This is considered to be an autoimmune disease that ultimately requires the extraction of all of the cat's teeth as the only means of potentially, not definitively, resolving the condition. Long term management is also an option.

- Despite this definitive diagnosis obtained at the cost of almost six thousand dollars I was advised to wait and to bring the cat back at a later date 'to reassess'. This would have been at further expense to me.
- Vet advice from SASH on feeding Cat B was that commercially produced cat food was the best option; that pet food manufacturers would not have spent so much on their products to "get it wrong"; that the feeding of raw meat is not a good option because, among other issues of concern, it carries a risk of causing toxoplasmosis.

I continued to feed both cats commercial cat foods due to my ignorance in trusting commercial pet food advertising, the advice of RSPCA staff, the rescue organisation and veterinarians.

At the same time, being both confused and frustrated as to why my cats had these issues and the standard vet default was to advise waiting instead of treating their respective conditions I searched elsewhere for help.

I found that:-

- commercially produced pet foods are a 'lucky dip' where the 'prizes' for the pet can range from poor health to illness and/or death
- overall commercially produced pet foods do not contain the necessary ingredients that cats require to maintain optimum health
- pet food labelling is complex and confusing and is also misleading, if not downright dishonest, with regard to the ingredients and stated benefits
- the pet food industry is, at best and worst, self-regulated and lacking accountability
- corporate pet food manufacturers are significantly involved with the education of vet students and with sponsorship of vets, animal welfare organisations/charities and with the marketing of their products through vet practices.
- that within this industry there appears to be a dishonesty that contributes to ill health for pets and for which uninformed pet owners pay the price of pet suffering and death – as well as through stress, financial outlay and grief.

My perception of why the vets did not proactively treat my cats includes any or all of the following:-

- lack of interest, care or concern
- by delaying while the cats' health further deteriorated vet treatment would be more extensive and so provide the vet with more income
- these vets lack education in, and understanding of, appropriate animal nutrition and so were ignorant of the fact that the commercial food was the major contributor to the dental issues of these cats
- the vets were fully aware of the cause of my cats' issues but it would have been counterproductive for them to address this with me

Treatment – finally:

I found the website www.rawmeatybones.com which led me to consult the author of the site, veterinarian Dr. Tom Lonsdale.

Dr. Lonsdale was proactive in treating my cats:

- he performed surgical dental procedures on each cat
Cat A had a clean and scale
Cat B was in such a bad state that there was a need for gum excisions and the extraction of some teeth.
- Dr. Lonsdale advised I cease feeding commercial cat food and prescribed feeding both cats an appropriate raw meaty bones diet, explaining that carnivores clean their teeth through the process of ripping, tearing and chewing raw meaty bones.

Positive Progress:

Within weeks of switching both cats to a raw meaty bones diet I witnessed the following positive changes in both of them:

- significantly improved moods and energy levels
- more alert
- shiny coats
- soft fur
- loss of excess weight
- healthy looking pink gums
- non-odorous breath
- clean teeth
- less odorous urine and faeces
- improved hydration
- better formed stools

Both cats continue to be fed a raw meaty bones diet and to maintain the positives on this list.

Diet is the common denominator with regard to the dental issues that each cat experienced. Both cats were sick, and getting sicker, while eating a commercially produced cat food diet.

My Conclusions:

- my cats' experiences attest to the fact that feeding commercial cat food, at the *absolute minimum*, facilitates the creation of dental disease
- dental and gum disease in general in domestic cats and dogs is directly linked to, and exacerbated by, the feeding of commercial pet food diets
- the alliances and sponsorships between the commercial pet food manufacturers, veterinarians and organisations directly involved with the care and welfare of animals in Australia represents a gross conflict of interest and of which the public is mostly unaware
- it is obviously not in the financial interests of the commercial pet food manufacturers nor the veterinary industry to promote the feeding of an appropriate, healthy raw food diet to domestic carnivore pets
- if the appropriate raw food diet was fed to domestic pets dental diseases would either not occur or would be drastically reduced overall

General points for this submission:

Pets are the Victims:

- Cats are obligate carnivores. Almost all commercially produced cat foods contains sugars, starches and carbohydrates which are not necessary for cats, cannot be digested by them and are damaging to their health when fed long term. Therefore these do not form an appropriate diet for cats.
Why then are these ingredients included? Is it because they are cost effective?
- Maintaining cat health does not appear to be a motivation for the producers of commercial cat food or the vets since long term feeding of commercially produced cat food commonly leads to chronic ill health requiring vet interventions. Many vets promote and sell commercial cat foods, which creates a cycle of pet illness and vet income.
- The RSPCA feeds the cats and dogs in their care Hills Pet food because Hills is their major sponsor. Again, this is a conflict of interest and is damaging to the health of these animals.
- Further, RSPCA staff advises pet owners/adopters to feed Hills pet food. I volunteer for the RSPCA and witness this happening ongoing. This disadvantages pet owners who have no idea of appropriate feeding and who trust the RSPCA to give them accurate information.

At the very least these practices seem to me to be unethical. At worst pets are knowingly victimized for profits.

Costs:

Commercial cat food is commonly prohibitively expensive. For example:-

- Royal Canin Kitten food pouches with gravy @ 85gm and priced at over \$2 per pouch x 3 pouches per day incurs an outlay of more than \$180 per month per kitten
- Hills Science Diet Kitten Liver & Chicken Entree Wet Cat Food 156g, priced at over \$3 per can x 3 cans per day incurs an outlay of \$270 per month per kitten
- A 2kg bag of Hills Science Diet Feline Care (*which is emblazoned with "Veterinarian Recommended" on the packet*) costs a minimum of \$32.95 depending upon the retailer.

Additionally, each of these products contains ingredients that cats do not need in their diets.

- ❖ **In contrast, I spend around \$30 per month per cat to feed an appropriate raw food diet.**

Dental Disease:

Most current day veterinary literature concerning the dental health of domestic cats and dogs states that these animals will exhibit dental issues by three years of age and will require ongoing dental care through veterinary intervention.

I submit that this would not be the case if pet carnivores were fed a more biologically appropriate raw meaty bones diet.

Raw Feeding is Not New News:

Raw feeding is not new news but it is ignored and regularly demonized by the commercial pet food industry and veterinarians.

See: <http://www.rawmeatybones.com/pdf/Vet%20Dentistry%201993.pdf>

See paragraph: Understanding the Mechanisms. Page 235

It can be seen here that the existence of periodontal disease and the relationship to diet has been known and documented since pre 1950.

These facts remain unchanged so:

- ***Why are the facts being ignored?***
- ***Who benefits from this?***

Dental Health Month – how is this NOT a conflict of interest?

The Australian Veterinary Association promotes August as 'Pet Dental Health Month'.

This is sponsored by Hills Pet Nutrition.

So the process can be seen as:

- unsuspecting owners feed diets of commercially produced pet food on the basis of advertising and advice from the trusted 'experts' such as the vets, RSPCA, Animal Welfare organisations and Charities.
- this leads to pet health issues where commonly the first visible signs are dental diseases.
- Vets, via Hills sponsorship for this promotion, provide a free dental health check where any existing dental issues will be identified and owners will be encouraged to seek further vet treatments, thus generating revenue for the vets.
- It is very unlikely that pet owners will be advised by these 'experts' that commercial pet food is a major reason for why their pet is suffering dental disease.
- If the subject of non-commercial raw feeding arises at all, it is common practice for vets to warn against it, citing reasons that range from the sublime to the ridiculous.

*I have friends whose dog has a dental clean and scale performed *every six months*. The dog is exclusively fed commercial pet food.

I would still be feeding commercial pet foods and be engaged in this toxic cycle had I not done my own research.

I have been subjected to vets promoting commercial food while also demonizing raw food. At this time my cats have been raw fed for approximately one year. Neither cat has ever become ill from raw feeding. In fact both cats have demonstrated significant improvements in overall health.

Zoo Animals:-

Carnivores in zoos are not fed commercially produced pet food. They are fed appropriate raw food which includes meat chunks, carcasses and whole prey. What is the incidence of dental disease for these zoo animals by comparison to domestic carnivore pets that are exclusively fed a commercial diet?

Further Information:

Some sources of information available via a Google search that may be of interest to the inquiry:-

- Raw Meaty Bones – Dr Tom Lonsdale www.rawmeatybones.com
- The Dog Risk Project in Helsinki, Finland - a research programme about nutritional, environmental and genetic factors behind canine diseases as well as cancer detection in dogs.
[This research has been ongoing for many years. A review of the findings would likely prove useful for this inquiry.](#)
- The video series The Truth About Pet Cancer.
- The Australian Animal Cancer Foundation
- Video: Pet Fooled – it is beyond horrifying to know what is allowed to be incorporated into a commercially produced pet food diet! It is criminal that this has been allowed to go on, unregulated, throughout the years.
- Three Ways Pet Food Companies are Lying to You
- Pet Food Reviews – Australia
- Feline Nutrition Foundation – provides a wealth of information <https://feline-nutrition.org/>
Specifically for raw feeding: <https://feline-nutrition.org/the-blogs/falling-off-the-recipe-cliff>
- Pottenger's Cats - Dr Francis Pottenger
<https://vetsallnatural.com.au/pottengers-cat-study/>
Although this study 1932-1942 predates the knowledge of the importance of amino acids, etc to cat health the findings just on feeding raw vs cooked meat remain valid

In conclusion:

Domestic pets have no control over what they are fed. Pet owners have no control over the selective information and dishonesty of pet food advertising.

The pet food industry needs to be strictly regulated and monitored by an independent body where:

- there can be no possibility of any conflict of interest
- the health and safety of pets is the guaranteed focus and the production of all commercial pet foods is subjected to thorough scrutiny and the highest standards available
- the producers are subject to the highest standard of the law

Sincerely,

J Vale