

## Most Frequently Asked BARF Questions Newcomers Ask!

**IMPORTANT:** The following information serves ONLY as a guide to those who are new to feeding their pets Bones & Raw Food. **Yes, COMPLETELY RAW FOOD (nothing cooked), INCLUDING RAW BONES. NEVER, EVER FEED COOKED BONES TO YOUR PET** because cooked bones WILL splinter and cause severe internal damage, possibly even death. Each animal's needs are unique; therefore, YOU will need to make the ultimate decision what is best for your pet -- healthwise and nutrition wise. The questions and answers that appear on this page are the most frequently asked questions newcomers to BARF have asked, along with the corresponding suggested answer. This information comes directly from experienced BARFers, as well as the books written by [Billinghamurst](#), [Schultze](#) and [Pitcairn](#). Again, this is ONLY a guide, and NOT a bible. They are in no particular order.

**This page is NOT a substitute for medical advice. If you feel (use your gut instinct) that something physically may truly be wrong with your pet, don't hesitate to drop off a stool/urine sample to your veterinarian or even get your pet to an animal hospital ASAP.**

### *Can I feed kibble AND BARF?*

Yes you can? Kibble and raw food are digested differently, and should NEVER be fed together, in the same meal. If you feed dry kibble at the same meal as the raw meat, you are increasing the amount of time the food is in the body, and increasing the possibility of illness from microbes. So, if you want to feed half & half, feed kibble one meal, raw the next. Kibble should be a super premium all natural, holistic dog and/or cat food, which contains all natural and human-grade ingredients, including digestive enzymes/probiotics and grape seed extract (antioxidant)....and NO Corn, No Wheat and No Dairy.

### *Is it o.k. to feed grains?*

Grains are not a natural food for dogs. It is not something they would eat in the wild. Those grains they would have access to would be in small quantities eaten from the stomachs of prey animals who had (in the right season) eaten some grasses that had seeded. These grains would also not look like our modern grains - more like wild rice (check it out at the supermarket and compare to domestic types).

Grains are also full of carbohydrates which can be easily converted to sugars. Cancer cells feed on sugars and it is believed that by decreasing the amount of carbohydrate in the diet, we may greatly reduce the risk of cancer (which is a growing problem among modern dogs).

So, in answer to your question, yes, grains can be fed; however, please keep the following in mind (when feeding grains), taken directly from a Dr. Billinghamurst seminar: grains are not a natural food for dogs; dogs do not, in fact, need carbohydrates; carbohydrates are easily converted into sugars which feed cancer. Remove the carbs and the cancer has less/nothing to feed on; and grains are one of the major causes of allergies in dogs, and can also cause flatulence (gas..PHEW!!!)!

I would suggest you read more on grains at the [Grain Free Pets](#) website. The page now includes a basic description of yeast infections, why they occur, what are the diet recommendations, why didn't my vet diagnose this problem.... as well as links on candida.

### *I'm a Vegetarian and do not want to feed meat to my pet. Can I still feed a raw diet?*

Absolutely, you can feed your pet a vegetarian diet. But the most important thing you will need to remember, since your pet won't be getting any meat, is to feed high quality protein with the meals, just as you do. The amino acids in

meat are essential nutrients, and if you're not feeding meat, your pet will get all the necessary amino acids from tofu, grains and beans. As you learn more about feeding a raw diet, you'll likely bump into many people who are totally against feeding grains. Feeding grains is a personal choice, and does work well for many. It is suggested that the protein be rotated because each and every protein source you choose has a different amino acid chain and concentration. It is also highly recommended to seek out organic grains and beans. Oils are also an essential ingredient in a vegetarian diet, so make sure these get alternated as well, once a week!

Putting together a proper and nutritionally complete vegetarian diet for your pet can be quite as complex as the traditional raw diet. You must do your research before plunging in! An absolutely EXCELLENT alternative, while you're researching and learning, is [Dr. Harvey's](#). The foods come complete with organic grains, vegetables, herbs and some required supplements. All you need to do is add your protein source and essential oils...and you have a nutritionally complete meal for your dog or cat. The food is also an excellent choice for pet owners who want to feed a traditional raw diet with meat or who want the convenience of a home-cooked meal for their pets.

### ***Do I really need to use supplements?***

I haven't cut supplements out totally, although IMO a lot of people tend to over-supplement. This was something Billinghamurst suggested too at a recent seminar here, and he mentioned that he only supplements his own dogs every now and again.

I think if you are providing a good varied diet you will be providing pretty much what your dog needs - all in a highly bio-available form. My first preference when looking to a certain vitamin/mineral will always be to provide it in its natural form first. So if I feel I need to provide more Vitamin B for example, I would consider what foods contain that vitamin first (e.g. liver) rather than reaching for an artificial supplement.

That said, I certainly see a benefit in supplementing those things that our dogs may be missing in the translation from a 'wild' diet to its 'modern' equivalent (i.e. BARF). As we don't necessarily feed the whole animal for example (eyes, brains, stomach and intestines etc etc as well) the addition of things like EFA's (e.g. , [fish oil](#), flaxseed oil) on occasion can be useful. I would include yogurt in this category too - it contains good bacteria which a dog may otherwise have got from eating stomach contents/intestines etc (but green tripe can help here too).

I like to add a bit of Kelp every now and again for its trace elements. Modern soils have been depleted by over-cropping etc and Australian soils in particular are low in iodine. Kelp adds back these trace elements into the diet.

I add Vitamins C and E every now and then for their antioxidant properties and their value to optimize health - particularly in our modern polluted environment. Vitamin C is particularly good in times of stress and I am more likely to include it then than at other times.

Now realize that while I do include these supplements, I do not include them every day. I don't believe they are necessary every day except some in certain circumstances and perhaps only for short periods. Of course every dogs and every situation will be different (if I lived in a city I might give more C and E for example to combat higher pollution). But remember you are providing a much more nutritious product to begin with with raw natural foods. They are probably getting more nutritional value now out of a varied BARF diet without the supplements that they ever did on kibble.

If you do use herbs and vitamins on a regular basis (whether it be for you or your pet), may I suggest you checkout [My Herbal Corner](#), where you'll find the highest quality herbal, vitamin, mineral and nutritional supplements worldwide! If you're only interested in herbs for pets, please click [here](#).

### ***Fish? You mean I can really toss my dog a whole fish?***

Absolutely...head, tail, body...the whole thing! Just be sure to check inside the fish for any hook that may have been forgotten to be removed. Fish is not a substitute for an RMB meal, but it can be fed a couple of times a week. One reason for this is the thiaminase enzyme in fish...it destroys thiamine (Vitamin B1). Fish especially rich in thiaminase are herring, capelin, suckers, smelts and various carp species, a total of some 50 species, most of which live in fresh water. Extra thiamin can be fed when feeding fish. Feeding whole fish is also an individual's personal choice. Many are afraid of the bones getting stuck...no problem, there are many varieties of nutritious canned fish on the market.

A special note with regards to those who live in the Pacific Northwest: salmon and trout can carry the rickettsia organism responsible for salmon poisoning. If your dog shows ANY signs of being ill within two weeks of feeding, get him/her to the vet, and tell them to look for salmon poisoning. This information is not meant to scare anyone, but it's extremely risky to feed raw salmon and trout from the Pacific Northwest..

### ***I've heard about trichinosis and pork. Is it safe to feed pork?***

As with many other food items, feeding pork is purely a personal choice. But yes, it CAN be fed, safely. Some dogs do very well on pork and others don't (loose stools). If you'd like to feed pork but are afraid of possible trichinosis, it is recommended that the pork be frozen, at Zero degrees F for 3 weeks, to kill the flukes. The incidence of trichinosis is actually fairly minimal in most places now (particularly in inspected meats). Many have fed fresh pork (pork necks, being a favorite) without any ill side-effects. Be aware of smoked pork necks, as they are slightly cooked from the smoking process. Pigs feet can also be fed, but are very high in fat...something you may want to avoid if your dog needs to lose a pound or two.

bit can help express the anal glands, which would normally be done by your vet, at a price!

### ***What are proper food safety techniques?***

Basic food safety techniques are really not much difference for handling dog food as they are for people food. Basically they involve washing your hands after handling meat etc, making sure cleaning cloths are clean and washed regularly (or use paper towels) and washing down benches with soap and hot water to curb bacteria growth (I use vinegar too). Some people do additional things, but these are the basics.

### ***How much will it cost me to feed BARF?***

This is a very difficult question to answer, as the answer depends on the size of your dog, how many dogs you have, their appetites, the price & availability of raw meaty bones in your area, as well as what veggies happen to be in season! The one thing you can be assured of...BARF will either cost the same as feeding kibble OR much less.

### ***Is it true that my vet bills will decrease drastically, if almost not at all? Why is this?***

Yes, you will find that vet trips will decrease dramatically as your dog's body becomes accustomed to it's new food. The main reason being is that all toxins from commercial food have been removed from your dog's body and his immune system is becoming greatly enhanced...thus eliminating many common ailments that you might normally make a vet appointment for, such as: dry & itchy skin, many allergies, skeletal problems, teeth cleaning, flea remedies, etc...

### ***What is offal?***

Offal is the term for organ meat. It usually consists of kidney, liver, and tripe or stomachs. Heart can be considered organ or muscle meat.

***What are some 'acceptable' BARF treats I can give my dog?***

You'll find lots of yummy recipes and treat ideas [here](#). Keep in mind that many of these recipes contains grains....so, be beware, if your dog is allergic to grains. If you have a dehydrator, then you're all set! You can dehydrate just about everything (e.g. liver, kidney, raw meat jerky, fruits, veggies, etc...). If you don't have a dehydrator, you can also use your oven. Keep a pan below the meats to catch the drippings. Set the oven on it's lowest setting (100-150 F) and use something to keep the door ajar. The jerky should be dry after 8-10 hours.

***What is MSM?***

MSM is methylsulphonylmethane. It's a sulfur compound. It's been found useful in the relief of symptoms associated with allergies, gastrointestinal upsets, arthritis and other musculoskeletal disorders. Glucosamine is most often an ingredient that can be found mixed with MSM, that promotes healthy joints and tissues. I use and recommend [Agility](#) by HealthyPetNet for my Boxers, as a preventative. Agility is so effective, many pet owners have been able to get their pets off of harmful steroid drugs (e.g. [Rimadyl](#)) and on to a natural course of treatment.

***Do I have to feed a completely balanced meal every day?***

Absolutely NOT! The thing to remember is that you are aiming for balance over time. You don't need to feed your dog a completely balanced meal every meal, or even every day. It's balance over time (3 weeks to a month), NOT every meal, that counts! This is the reason for feeding a variety of foods.

***What's up with Katie's MyBlueDog website? It kinda scares me.***

Mention of the [MyBlueDog](#) website comes up from time to time on many BARF lists, and it's really scary to newbies. Certainly there are risks in life whether it's from raw bones or kibble (witness the Iditarod racer whose dog aspirated on a piece of kibble and died). This person (Katie), when questioned by BARFers, keeps touting statistics but never really comes thru with concrete information & what she does say is very exaggerated. However, it's good to see and think about both sides, but we, who believe in barf just roll our eyes & say, "Oh, there's Katie and the Blue Dog (2nd Chance Ranch) site again. To feed BARF is a personal choice...just make sure you do the best research possible and remember that experience is knowledge.

**NEW - [please read Dr. Ian Billinghurst's replies to many of Katie's questions!](#)** This should certainly put your mind at ease!

***Where should I feed my dog her RMBs?***

Go to your local cheapie store (even Dollar store) and buy a vinyl table cloth. Spread it on your kitchen floor and you have an easily sanitizable place to feed. After "dinner" you can just wipe/mop it up with bleach in a spray bottle. You may even consider tying your dog to the oven handle with an old leash, so she won't leave her 'dinner table' in the middle of eating, and wander through the house with her RMBs!

***How do I know if my dog has allergies?***

Many dogs are allergic to grains and yeast products. If your dog is scratching alot (check for fleas first) and has 'gunky' ears, then the odds are that your dog has allergies. An elimination diet will help determine the cause of the allergies.

***What is a good starter oil? Flaxseed? Safflower? Fish oil? Help! Flaxseed? Safflower? Fish oil? Help!***

If you are feeding chicken Raw Meaty Bones which have some skin and fat on them, you probably don't need to add much in the way of Omega 6 Essential Fatty Acids (EFA's), but instead, mostly Omega 3. Flaxseed oil or fish oil are probably your best sources of this. Many dogs are allergic to flaxseed, so keep your eyes open for any sign of an allergic reaction (itching).

***Does giving garlic really have that many benefits?***

Absolutely!!! If given regularly, it is also known to keep the fleas away...they don't like garlic! Garlic is also a natural antibiotic and fungal fighter. When it comes to foods that really work, garlic is as good as it gets.

This pungent bulb offers a plethora of health benefits. For starters, studies show that people who consume garlic regularly have lower cholesterol levels. Other research indicates that garlic thins the blood--specifically by preventing platelets from sticking together and clotting--and that may translate into lower blood pressure as well as a diminished risk of heart disease and stroke.

What's less well known is that garlic gets much of its goodness from its high selenium content, a trace mineral that has been heralded for its antioxidant and cancer-fighting properties. In fact, if you load meals with lots of garlic (in addition to C & E), you shouldn't need to add a selenium supplement to your diet.

***On the raw diets I have read, poultry seems to be the main meat. Is there a reason I don't see beef as part of this diet?***

Chicken tends to be cheaper and easier to obtain, plus beef is much fattier and richer. But as long as you are providing a variety of meats, feeding a lot of beef shouldn't be a problem.

***My dog just regurgitated part of his chicken wing? Is this related to chewing (or not chewing)?***

It's not uncommon at all for dogs new to the diet to have trouble digesting the new bones. Sometimes they might vomit them up (and then continue to eat what they've just regurgitated) and sometimes some of the bone might pass through in the stool. This is purely related to NOT chewing properly or because the body is not used to digesting raw foods. Adding a digestive enzyme during the transitional phase would be most beneficial in cases like this. Of course, if it really does worry you that much, you can always go for giving larger bones or by grinding in the beginning and then maybe work your dog up to eating bones. By the time he's used to digesting the ground bones, he should be able to handle the whole bones with no issues.

***YUCK, my dog eats his poo.....why is he doing this and will this harm him?***

There are several reasons why feces are attractive to dogs. The first is the fact that they are full of bacteria, which help in food digestion. These are missing in commercial processed foods. They are also high in B vitamins, which some dogs may crave. They do have some digestive enzymes in them too which again, processed foods lack. This is why bitches lick puppies all over, it is actually helpful to get some of this to the puppies mouth.

Eating stool won't harm a dog, but it does offend us humans! It can also become a habit, which will slow in time if either a raw diet is fed, or supplement with a full spectrum digestive enzyme, beneficial bacteria (such as probiotic powder) and B vitamin. And of course, remove the stools religiously from your yard!

***How long does it take for raw food to digest, compared to cooked, or even kibble?***

According to Kymthy Schultze, in her book "[The Ultimate Diet](#)," raw stays in the stomach 4-5 hours, cooked about 8-10 hours and kibble takes approximately 15 hours to be broken down and move out of the stomach.

***I've heard so much about transfer factors and how they support our immune systems. Where can I learn more?***

Transfer factors are a safe substance for all animals and humans. Transfer factors are the primary communications mechanism used by the immune system to defend your pet against harmful microbial threats. Transfer factors are small molecules that consist of specific sequences of amino acids. These small compounds naturally occur in all mammals and are passed from mother to newborn through the mother's first milk called colostrum. These small transfer factor molecules then start to educate the newborn's naive immune system, which in turn will protect them from the microbial threats they encounter all their life.

Transfer factors have three primary functions. When we encounter a potential microbial threat transfer factors: 1) recognize and alert our immune system to the "threat" 2) condition our immune system to respond quickly to "threats" 3) remember the threats we encounter to quickly respond in the future. Learn all about transfer factors [here](#)! Or learn about transfer factors for pets right [here](#)! Be sure to read the article from the Whole Dog Journal January 2004 Issue on [Immune Boosters](#), which goes into much detail about transfer factors!