IAHAIO POSITION STATEMENT
AGAINST THE FEEDING OF RAW PROTEIN OF ANIMAL ORIGIN
TO ANIMALS INVOLVED IN AAI

IAHAIO advises against the feeding of raw protein of animal origin to animals involved in AAI. This is due to the many risks of such feeding practices to human and animal health, particularly for those who are immuno-compromised.

IAHAIO recommends that all AAI practitioners follow the latest scientific evidence to provide a safe and well-balanced diet for animals involved in AAI.

Preamble

There is growing concern amongst public health bodies, for example, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Public Health England (PHE), regarding the documented zoonotic risks associated with the trend of feeding raw proteins of animal origin to dogs and cats.

There is much misinformation and many myths about such feeding practice. To date, there is no scientific evidence to support the suggested benefits of such a diet, whilst the risks to in-contact people and to animals are many and are well documented. Should an adverse incident occur as a result of an AAI animal being fed on raw protein of animal origin, then the effect is likely to have a major negative impact on the field of AAI.

Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAI) are often carried out with individuals with vulnerable health status who may be particularly susceptible to infectious diseases. They are therefore at greater risk of contracting a zoonotic illness from animals fed on raw protein of animal origin and of developing very serious sequelae, including death.

This IAHAIO statement has been prepared primarily for those engaged in delivering AAI. It provides an overview of the main documented risks to humans and animals associated with feeding raw protein of animal origin. It draws on the latest published research and scientific evidence. Based on this evidence, IAHAIO advises on good practices that should be implemented by AAI practitioners to ensure the health and safety of all AAI participants - human and animal.

The references provided allow for more in depth reading on these topics. Additionally, further information can be obtained from your program veterinarian/s.
The risks of feeding raw proteins of animal original to animals involved in AAI:

- Raw proteins of animal origin (See Appendix 1), whether intended for human or animal consumption, are frequently contaminated with pathogens. These include, but are not limited to, bacteria such as Salmonella spp, Campylobacter spp, E. Coli spp, Listeria spp; parasites including giardia, toxoplasma, cryptosporidium and hydatid; and viruses including norovirus and Aujesky’s disease virus.

- Most of these organisms are zoonotic i.e. are transmissible to people, and can cause a wide range of symptoms in humans including gastrointestinal disease, septicemia, miscarriage, kidney failure, meningitis and sometimes death.

- The risks are greater for those who are immunocompromised including children, older people, pregnant women, and many other AAI client groups.

- These organisms can also cause a wide range of illnesses in animals including gastrointestinal disease, neurological disorders, paralysis and sometimes death.

- Many diets containing raw protein of animal origin, including some of those commercially prepared, are very nutritionally imbalanced. Pancreatitis, pansteatitis, hypervitaminosis A, hyperthyroidism, skeletal deformities and bone fractures have been recorded.

- Dogs fed on raw protein of animal origin can transmit serious parasites to livestock.

- Such foods may contribute to the emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance to people and other animals (AMR). AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites no longer respond to medicines making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.

Given the above risks, IAHAIO advises ...

- Animals involved in AAI must not be fed raw protein of animal origin, nor live in a household where this is practised.

- Raw proteins of animal origin must be properly heat treated to 165 degrees Fahrenheit (i.e. 74° Celsius) to kill pathogens. Neither freezing nor drying is effective in killing most of these pathogens.

- A 90-day suspension from AAI programmes if animals ingest such products.

- The importance of good hygiene practices for people handling raw meat.

- Feeding a safe and well-balanced diet to small animals involved in AAI following recommendations from the Global Committee on Nutrition (see Appendix 2).

- Board members and program managers to be aware of their responsibilities for keeping AAI clients, staff and animals safe from zoonoses, and also be aware that they may be held legally liable for consequences arising from permitting raw protein of animal origin.

- A multi-disciplinary One Health approach, including the involvement of a veterinary adviser in every program. See the IAHAIO Chicago Declaration on One Health.
References

References about Public Health Bodies’ concerns

Centers for Disease Control Pet Food Safety (cdc.gov) Pet Food Safety (cdc.gov)

Food and Drug Administration (2017). Get the Facts! Raw pet food diets can be dangerous to you and your pet
https://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/ResourcesforYou/AnimalHealthLiteracy/ucm373757.htm

Public Health England (2017, August) Investigation into an outbreak of Shiga toxin producing Escherichia coli

References about pathogens in raw meat and harm to people


References about illness in animals


Tufts Cumming School of Veterinary Medicine on Raw Meat: A Healthy Choice or a Raw Deal Raw Diets: A Healthy Choice or a Raw Deal? Clinical Nutrition Service at Cummings School (tufts.edu)

*References about antimicrobial resistance*


World Health Organisation Fact Sheet  Accessed 2nd October 2021
Antimicrobial resistance (who.int)

*Reference about suspending animals’ involvement in AAI for 90 days*


*Reference about food hygiene*


*Reference about myths pertaining to feeding raw protein of animal origin*


*References about legal liability*

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
CVMA Documents | Raw Meat-Based Diets for Pets - Position Statement (canadianveterinarians.net) Accessed on 2nd October


Appendices

Appendix 1

Raw protein of animal origin includes the following:

- Raw and undercooked meat, from domesticated or wild animals, whether commercially produced or home made, and whether frozen, freeze dried, dehydrated or kibble with a covering of raw
- Raw and undercooked meat by-products including freeze dried liver and other freeze-dried treats, bones, hooves, trotters, pigs’ ears, rawhide chews, bullies and pizzles (cattle penises)
- Uncooked offals i.e. the non-muscle parts of animals’ bodies e.g. heart, trachea, lungs, kidney, spleen, uterus, testes, udder, liver, pancreas, intestines, tripe, brain
- Blood
- Raw and undercooked fish and shellfish
- Raw and undercooked eggs
- Unpasteurised or raw milk and its by products including unpasteurised cheese, unpasteurised yoghurt, unpasteurised cream

Appendix 2

Advice on selecting pet foods

Concerns about the quality of some commercial pet foods is one of the drivers for people choosing to feed raw protein of animal origin. The World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA), recognising the need for guidance on pet food selection, established the Global Nutrition Committee. This expert committee has published a series of helpful resources, including pet nutrition guidelines. They do not recommend particular brands.

GNC_Guidelines_120421 (wsava.org)
The-Savvy-Dog-Owner-s-Guide-to-Nutrition-on-the-Internet.pdf (wsava.org)
The-Savvy-Cat-Owner-s-Guide-to-Nutrition-on-the-Internet.pdf (wsava.org)

Appendix 3

Other policies about feeding dogs and cats raw protein of animal origin

American Animal Hospital Association
Raw protein diet (aaha.org)

American Veterinary Medical Association
Raw or undercooked animal-source protein in cat and dog diets | American Veterinary Medical Association (avma.org) | Accessed on 2nd October 2021

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
CVMA | Documents | Raw Meat-Based Diets for Pets - Position Statement (canadianveterinarians.net)
Accessed on 2nd October

World Small Animal Veterinary Association
Accessed on 2nd October 2021


Animal Assisted Interventions International
AAII raw diet policy – Animal Assisted Intervention International (aai-int.org)
Accessed on 2nd October 2021

This policy statement is approved by the IAHAIO Board, December 2021