

# Raw pet food

Advice on safe handling and storage of raw pet food at home.

## What is raw pet food?

Raw pet food is pet food that is made up of unprocessed or uncooked meat, offal and raw bone. Sometimes other uncooked ingredients such as fruits, vegetables, oils, nuts seeds and raw eggs are added. It may not always be obvious that products - including dried pet treats and chews - contain raw meat.

## Risks

Raw pet food, particularly meat, may contain pathogens or bacteria that could cause illness and which would normally be killed during the cooking process. Feeding raw pet food introduces extra risks, not just to your pet's health but also to people in your household.

Even with the greatest care, the risk of cross-contamination is much higher with raw pet food compared to other pet food. This is because bacteria such as [E.coli or Salmonella](#) could be spread around through contact with the pet food or your pet. If pets become infected, they may pass on these infections to their owners.

## Who is at higher risk?

### Children

Small children often put objects in their mouth, including their fingers, and are at higher risk of becoming unwell because their immune systems are still developing.

Children, especially those under 5, should not touch or eat raw pet food or treats. If they do come into contact with raw pet food, you should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water.

### Older people and those with a weakened immune system

Older people and people who have a weakened immune system are at higher risk of infection from food poisoning bacteria and other pathogens.

If you are older, or have a weakened immune system, you should make sure to follow good food hygiene practices and store and handle food safely. You should always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after handling raw pet food or treats.

## Reducing the risk of cross-contamination

Some people can become unwell after handling raw pet food and treats without taking the correct hygiene precautions or handling measures. Good hygiene practices and safe storage and handling when sourcing and making raw pet food are essential to reduce the risk of illness. You should follow the same principles to [avoid cross-contamination](#) that you would when preparing and handling food for humans.

Everyone should follow good hygiene practices and store and handle raw pet food safely, but if you are at higher risk or have people in your household that are at higher risk then you should be extra careful.

## **Hygiene around raw pet food**

- wash your hands with soap and hot water immediately after handling and preparing any raw pet food or treats
- store and defrost pet food and treats away from where human food is stored and prepared
- clean and disinfect all surfaces that the raw pet food has touched, such as work surfaces, storage containers utensils and feeding bowls

## **Safe storage and handling of raw pet food**

- freeze raw pet food until it is required and label it clearly so that you know exactly what it is
- use dedicated utensils and containers for handling and storing raw petfood. Do not use utensils and containers that you used for raw pet food to handle and prepare human food. Clean these thoroughly after use
- if you have made fresh raw pet food and want to store it in the fridge short-term, then make sure it is clearly labelled in a sealed container
- keep raw pet food away from other food in the fridge or freezer. Store it on the lowest shelf of the fridge to avoid drips transferring onto human food
- defrost frozen pet foods away from human food, food preparation surfaces and equipment. Keep your defrosting raw pet food clearly labelled in a sealed container
- throw away any raw pet food that is not eaten as soon as reasonably practical
- thoroughly clean any surfaces that the raw food may have fallen on after your pet has eaten