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Veterinarian Council Issues Pet Food Alert

Pet diets with raw meat can transmit internal parasites and bacteria

BEL AIR, Md. (April 16, 2007) – Recent pet food recalls have prompted pet owners to consider the safety of foods that they are feeding their pets. The nonprofit Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC) warns pet owners of the dangers associated with feeding pets under-cooked meat.

“We recognize some pet owners may choose to feed homemade diets in lieu of those that are commercially prepared, especially with the pet food recalls of the last month,” says Jay Stewart, DVM, Aumsville Animal Clinic, Aumsville, Ore. “The CAPC is posting this important alert due to the potential transmission of certain internal parasites and bacteria through the feeding of diets with raw meat sources. Pet owners need to be aware.”

Some parasites and bacteria found in raw meats can be transmitted to humans (zoonosis) and make animals sick. Cooking foods appropriately will help to kill parasites and bacteria and may improve the digestibility of the proteins in the diet.

“All dogs and cats should be fed a well-balanced diet regardless of whether it is commercially or home-prepared. Your veterinarian is the best resource for determining your pet’s dietary needs,” continues Stewart. “They may also be able to provide recipes for nutritionally balanced home-prepared foods. Any questions regarding proper diet should be directed to your veterinarian.”

Susan Little, DVM, PhD, Center for Veterinary Health Sciences, Oklahoma State University, provides additional suggestions for controlling parasites in pets and reducing the overall risk of exposure to zoonotic infection in humans:

- Year-round broad-spectrum heartworm preventatives that control parasites transmissible to humans
- Year-round flea and tick control
- Annual physical examinations
- Cooked food and fresh water
- Annual heartworm tests
- Annual fecal examinations for adult pets; more frequent fecal examinations for puppies

The following parasites can be transmitted by raw food to your pets:

Dogs and cats

- Roundworms
- Hookworms
- Tapeworms
- Trichinella- Trichinosis
- Protozoa
- Trematodes

Cats

- Toxoplasma

Dogs

- Salmon Poisoning Disease

For a list of recalled pet foods go to www.menufoods.com.

For more information about the CAPC and tips to keep your pet and family safe from parasites and the diseases they cause, visit www.petsandparasites.org. This CAPC Web site provides general information about 10 of the most common internal and external parasites of dogs and cats. The site, which is divided into “Dog Owner” and “Cat Owner” sections, provides answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about pets, parasites and their effects on human and animal health. Pet owners can also find information about the behavioral changes and other symptoms that indicate their dog or cat may be infected by parasites.

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