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**INFECTIEUZE RISICO'S VAN VOEDING OP BASIS VAN RAUW VLEES**


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**VRAAG**

*“De laatste jaren kiezen veel klanten diepvriesvoeding voor hun hond of kat wegens het zogenaamde wolfs patroon. Gezien deze voeding bacteriologisch waarschijnlijk niet steriel is, wat kan de bijdrage ervan zijn tot het verspreiden van immuun-resistente bacteriën, zowel bij mens als dier?”*

*“Werd dit reeds onderzocht en kan deze voeding een bedreiging voor de volksgezondheid betekenen die door de overheid moet worden gemonitord?”*

**ANTWOORD**

Nowadays, veterinarians receive more and more questions about raw meat-based diets (RMBDs). It is well recognized that these diets may act as a carrier of bacteria and parasites, which may present a health issue not only for pets but also for humans. Therefore, the role of veterinarians in the distribution of the knowledge of and communication about the risk of consuming RMBDs has become essential.

Raw meat, whether sold for human consumption or included in commercial RMBDs, may be contaminated with a variety of pathogens, of which some are well-known zoonotic agents. The most common of these agents are *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella* spp, *Clostridium* spp, *Campylobacter* spp, and *Listeria* spp. Parasites, such as *Toxoplasma gondii*, have also been identified in raw meats.

Despite the control programs implemented by the European Food Safety Authority on food-borne disease, several reports have been published on the presence of *Salmonella* spp and other pathogens in commercial and home-prepared RMBDs. Meat may become contaminated during the evisceration, processing and packing stages. Because freezing and freeze-drying do not destroy all of these pathogens, both home-prepared and commercial RMBDs are at risk of being contaminated with these and other pathogens.

Some RMBD manufacturers currently use high hydrostatic pressure processing in an attempt to reduce the risks of pathogen presence. Although this process can reduce the number of many pathogens, it usually does not eliminate all of them.

Once the dog or cat eats an RMBD, contaminating bacteria can colonize the pet and may result in (sub-clinical) infection. Even though excretion of the

pathogen is usually higher during disease episodes, pets can also shed these pathogens without showing any symptoms and spread them into the environment, which is a risk factor for infection of humans. Humans may get infected with these pathogens due to increased infection pressure in the pet's environment in general, during the preparation of RMBD for their pet, or even in case the animal licks its owner immediately after having eaten raw food. It has been shown that bacteria contaminating meat can be resistant to one or more antimicrobial agents. The presence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in RMBDs could pose a serious risk to both animal and public health, not only because infections with these bacteria can be more difficult to treat, but also because feeding RMBDs may contribute to the spread of antimicrobial resistant bacteria and antimicrobial resistance genes in pets and their environment.

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Dierenarts C. Baptista da Silva  
 Vakgroep Diervoeding, Genetica en Ethologie,  
 Faculteit Diergeneeskunde, UGent,  
 Heidestraat 19, B-9820 Merelbeke