

## CONVERTING CATS TO A RAW FOOD DIET

### 1. JUST DO IT, MAKE A COMMITMENT TO FIND A WAY.

Some cats will convert easily, as if they have been waiting their whole lives for REAL FOOD. Others will stretch and exhaust all of your creative efforts. You may have to use additional resources to get other ideas. Call Brighthaven, e-mail Pat McKay, visit Web sites, get past issues of *THE WHOLE CAT JOURNAL*. Pets come to us as teachers and this may be your biggest lesson on patience and perseverance!

### 2. OFFER DIFFERENT MEAT TYPES AND CHOICES TO FIND PREFERENCES.

Some cats prefer poultry, and others love fish and seafood. Find their favorites and use it to your advantage as flavor enhancers. Some like ground meat, which is definitely the easiest, but there are those who only want chunks of meat – if you are not having success with ground meat, try chunks. Many cats have easily been converted to raw by mixing small amounts of the raw meat (ground or chunks) with the canned or dry food they are currently eating. Slowly change proportions, gradually increasing the amount of raw meat, until they are fully converted to the raw diet. For those cats that are already eating cooked meat, gradually cook the meat less and less until they are eating it entirely uncooked.

### 3. TAKE AWAY THE DRY FOOD, FEED TIMED FEEDINGS.

Kibble can be addictive to cats, but it doesn't mean that it's good for them. Brownies and fast food taste good to most people, but are lacking in nutritional value. You cannot successfully convert to a raw food diet if they know they can always snack on their junk food. You have to practice a little tough love. However, you never want a cat to go anorectic. **Therefore, relatively healthy cats should fast for no more than 24 hours and overweight cats should fast no more than 12 hours.** Overweight and obese cats have a propensity to mobilize fat directly to their liver if they stop eating for an extended period of time, which can result in **Hepatic Lipidosis**. This can be a very serious and even fatal disease, so coerce them into eating a little bit of anything if they are being stubborn. Keep dry food as a treat only for desperate measures while converting. Offer food 3-4 times a day in the beginning if needed and then slowly reduce the number of feedings. Leave the food down for no more than 1 hour and start with small amounts. Many experts say that cats need to be fed only once daily, but I prefer to feed twice daily. Kittens and pregnant cats have much higher metabolic demands and need to be fed more often.

### 4. USE FLAVOR ENHANCERS.

Commercial cat food STINKS, literally. Raw food doesn't have much of an odor, so part of the difficulty in converting to the raw food diet could be the lack of odor. Since many cats love seafood you can try adding canned tuna, canned mackerel, canned oysters or just the juice from any these to the raw food to entice your cat to eat. You can also try dried Bonita fish flakes or dehydrated shrimp (found in Japanese Markets). These can be pulverized and sprinkled on the food. You can also try dehydrated liver for those that are not fond of fish. Many cats really like the taste of raw organ meats also. Be creative!

### 5. WARM THE FOOD TO ROOM TEMPERATURE.

Most cats do better if the food is at room temperature. Cold food can slow digestion and even cause vomiting. Do not cook it to warm it because you will damage the structure of the protein and destroy the natural enzymes. DO NOT MICROWAVE. The best way to warm it is to add a little bit of warm water to bring the overall temperature up. Another way that works is the old-fashioned baby food warmers. ADD THE ENZYMES AND SUPPLEMENTS AFTER THE FOOD HAS BEEN WARMED AND MIXED THOROUGHLY – this will prevent damage to the structure of the enzymes.

## 6. BALANCE OUT DETAILS AFTER CONVERTING.

Nutritional balancing occurs over time. We do not eat a balanced diet at every meal. The goals for a balanced diet are listed below, but don't worry about it during the conversion process. Start to work on the details after the first month or two of the new diet. In the beginning, just get some raw meat into the diet and start experimenting to find your cat's tastes and tolerances.

### GOALS FOR A BALANCED DIET

- 75-90% raw meat. Raw meat includes bones as well as muscle meat. Use about 1/3 the amount of bones as muscle meat, e.g. 1/3 pound of ground meaty bones with 1 pound of muscle meat. You can vary the total amount as needed but keep the proportions of bones to meat fairly constant. NO PORK, FISH BONES, OR RAW SALMON should be used. Anything else goes: turkey, chicken, fish, ostrich, emu, duck, venison, lamb, beef, etc. Most cats do great on poultry.
- 10-25% raw grated/chopped/pulped vegetables. Pulped = grated/chopped and blended with water. Mixed with meats, this is acceptable for the most finicky of cats. Include carrots, dark leafy greens, cauliflower, broccoli (a cat's favorite), peas, zucchini, or cabbage, etc. Herbs, such as parsley, dandelion, carrot tops should be added in small amounts, they are very potent and strong tasting.
- 5-10% raw organ meat such as heart, liver, or kidney. I prefer Halshan's ground organ meats because it is easier than doing it yourself. It is best to keep the species of organ meat the same as the meat that is being fed e.g. chicken liver with chicken meat and beef heart with beef meat. Mixing meat species may cause digestive upset on occasion although I have not personally observed this.
- Vitamin/Mineral Supplements. Possibilities include "Animal Essentials" (preferred) Pat McKay's products, TCInstincts, Celestial Pet, Kymythy's kelp/alfalfa mix, Catalyn by Standard Process, etc.
- Essential Fatty Acids. Essential fatty acids rich in Omega 3 can be obtained from "Animal Essentials" (preferred), cod liver oil, flaxseed oil, evening primrose oil, or other combination formulas.

**Sample Meals:** My feline friends are doing great on Wright's Poultry 80/20 mix, which is the most complete and easy raw food you can feed, containing meat and bones, veggies and organ meat. Other recipes that work well are to mix 1 pound of any variety of Halshan's raw meat with veggies with 1/3 pound of Wright's ground chicken necks/backs (many cats seem to prefer Wright's over Halshan's ground necks) and stir in 1-2 Tablespoons of Halshan's ground organ meat. This can be kept in a sealed container in the refrigerator for 3-4 days and you can refreeze excess in plastic container. For each meal, only need 1-2 Tblsp. of raw food and add the supplements described above after the meat mixture has warmed to room temperature

**Variety:** To provide variety, you can vary the type of meat provided – offering an alternative meat source, fish or quality raw eggs as often as you wish. The more variety the better, but just by feeding raw food you are way ahead of the game. Try to give an alternate meat source at least once weekly.

**Fasting:** Routine weekly fasting for liver detoxification is a good idea, but not necessary. I recommend starting with 12 hours and gradually working up to 24 hours. Always provide fresh water.

**Calcium:** The raw bones are the preferred main source of calcium, IF YOU CANNOT FEED BONES, YOU MUST USE A CALCIUM SUPPLEMENT! Calcium supplements can be obtained from "Animals Essentials," Pat McKay, TCInstincts, Celestial Pet, etc. If you use bone meal, make sure you know it is a quality source because of heavy metal contaminants.