

## How to Switch Your Cats to Raw Food

As many of you cat owners already know, cats can be extremely finicky. Switching them to a raw diet can be very difficult or very easy depending on your cat. If your cat easily makes the switch, great. If not, be prepared to have a lot of patience and persistence to make the switch.

Cats are obligate carnivores. This means that they absolutely need raw meat as a complete diet. If we look at the characteristics of a cat anyone can see that this is true.

- Strong predatory instincts – stalking, chasing and pouncing
- Excellent eyesight
- Acute hearing
- Keen sense of smell
- Soft paw pads for silently stalking prey
- Sharp claws for traction while hunting and catching prey
- Sharp teeth that come together to slice like scissors for gnawing, ripping and tearing
- Jaws that open and close in a vertical plane only, rather than moving horizontally
- Strong stomach acids for neutralizing potentially harmful bacteria on raw meat
- Short digestive tract which makes for rapid digestive transit time, minimalizing the opportunity for potentially harmful bacterial colonization

Now that we have a clear idea of what cats characteristics are the next step is how to switch kitty onto a raw diet.

The first thing to do if your cat is on dry food is to stop free feeding. Offer the same amount of food every day but split it into three meals and remove each meal after 20 min. This should be done for two reasons. The first is to give them a bit of an edge to the cats appetite. Secondly it will help reduce your cats addiction to grain based carbohydrates.

If you think it is necessary you can begin switching the cat to a wet canned food. This is closer to the texture of raw food. If the cat is already used to eating canned food then this is the time to eliminate the dry all together.

Please remember that all cats are different and will have many different reactions to being switched. The worst thing you can do is force them or leave them without food for more than 24 hours. Cats are very susceptible to a disease called Hepatic Lipidosis. This disease is a very serious and potentially fatal liver disease. When the cats body is starved it begins to use it's stored fat reserves. This fat is then sent to the liver to be transformed into energy. The liver is unable to metabolize the extra fat and the liver cells become swollen with fatty deposits, damaging the organ. This results in nausea and vomiting making it very difficult for them to eat enough to survive.

Given the knowledge of this possible disease it is very important that your cat eats enough every day. During the switch you may have to still feed what the cat already eats readily. You may have to add a few bribe foods to get the cat to eat more raw food such as;

- a smear of canned cat food
- a bit of grated Parmesan cheese
- some smashed canned sardines, anchovies or herring
- a sprinkling of crushed kibble
- some meat, bone and/or giblet broth, used like a marinade
- whatever other favorite treat you know your kitty loves

Most importantly, let the cat make the transition at her own pace and remember don't give up! Contrary to what your kitty may think you are smarter than they are!

<http://rawfedcats.org/practicalguide.html>

<http://rawfed.com/myths/cats.html>

<http://www.reunionrescue.com/id49.html>