



WSAVA Questionnaire

Guidelines on Selecting Pet Foods

What to Look for in a Brand

1. Do They Employ a Nutritionist?

Yes, Big Country Raw has a full time Pet Nutrition Expert on staff. Julie Lauzon is an Agrologist, accredited by the Ordre des Agronomes du Québec, supported by Agrologists Canada Institute. On top of her bachelor's degree in Agronomy that includes over 450 hours in animal science (200 in animal nutrition), she has a master's degree in Animal Science. Both degrees were achieved at the Université Laval, Québec City.

2. Who Formulates the Diets?

Diets are formulated by our full-time Pet Nutrition Expert (see credentials in question number one) with over 8 years of experience in food formulation, using formulation software and validated by laboratory analysis.

3. What is the Quality Control Process for Ingredients and Finished Products?

Diets are formulated to follow the National Research Council's Nutrient Requirements of Dogs and Cats. Big Country Raw uses both nutrient data and laboratory analysis to formulate the recipes and achieve these guidelines. Big Country Raw is HACCP Certified to ensure maximum safety of our finished goods.

What to Look for on a Label

1. Is There a Nutrition Adequacy Statement?

Each of our products are labelled according to their nutritional values. Complete diets are identified as Complete NRC Nutrition, and supplementation information is also indicated on both carton labels and our website, if needed. Rotation is also recommended for all recipes and the rotation statement is also indicated on both our labels and the website. As indicated on our labels and website, Big Country Raw meals are suitable for all life stages.

2. How Many Calories per gram or Serving of Food?

We have a complete analysis for each formulation available on our website (including all vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and fatty acids), as well as guaranteed analysis on the label. Big Country Raw even shares a comparable chart to the NRC guidelines for all recipes, and how to match them when supplementation is needed.

3. Does the Company Provide Immediate Contact Information Such as a Phone Number or Email?

There are many ways to easily reach out to someone at Big Country Raw. By phone, email and even online chat. There will always be someone ready to help. Contact information is readily available on our website.

4. Who Makes the Food?

All Big Country Raw Meals, Side Dishes, Bones, etc are made right here in Canada, in our own facility in Smithville, Ontario. We control every step of the process, from raw materials sourcing to distribution, including production and packaging. We have complete control over the quality of our raw food.



Frequently Asked Questions

For Veterinarians
and Pet Health Professionals

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1. How is Big Country Raw Providing Food Safety and Nutrient Adequacy?

We use strictly human-grade ingredients, and process everything at our own facility. We are HACCP Certified, audited by Bureau Vertitas, which ensures safe raw product manipulation, accurate traceability, flash freezing process, protection from cross-contamination, bacterial testing, etc. We have a full-time HACCP certified manager on staff, as well as a full-time pet nutrition expert (agr, M. Sc.). Our pet nutrition expert works closely with the production team to ensure use of the best quality ingredients. Recipes are software formulated as per NRC requirements and then third-party laboratory tested. In addition, we did an extended AAFCO feeding trial.

2. How Can We Ensure Our Diets Meet NRC Requirements?

Ingredients are sent to a third-party laboratory for analysis, and the results are put in a formulation software. We balance the recipes according to the NRC minimum and recommended allowance for growing puppies/kittens and adult dogs. The final recipe is then again sent for laboratory analysis for confirmation of the software results.

3. Why Not Follow AAFCO Guidelines?

AAFCO requirements are, in fact, mostly based on NRC recommendation. The only difference is that for many nutrients, especially micronutrients, AAFCO uses a digestibility factor that is lower than NRC, based on the commonly used ingredients in the industry. Some oxide forms of minerals, for example, have a digestibility of 20%, while the same minerals in an organic form, that haven't been through any processing will have a digestibility of over 90%. Salt is another big difference between AAFCO and NRC guidelines. Using AAFCO guidelines, sodium requirements for growing puppies is almost twice as high as NRC, so a raw diet balanced to this standard would need added salt, which we know could lead to kidney and cardiovascular issues. Another element that impacts the digestibility factor of AAFCO guidelines is the carbohydrate content of common processed diets. Carbs, and other plant-based components like phytates or tannins, can reduce the digestibility of other nutrients, which we do not find in a raw diet. Instead of

following AAFCO nutrient requirement guidelines, which are not adapted to a raw diet, we conducted an extended AAFCO feeding trial to support our nutrition claims based on NRC formulation.

4. Is Big Country Raw Suitable for Growing Puppies, Including Large Breeds?

Yes, our DINNER formulas have been formulated to cover minimum requirements, without exceeding the safe maximum amount of vitamins and minerals, including ratios, to be suitable for all life stages. This includes growing puppies and giant breeds. Our Pures and Blends on the other hand, are not individually formulated for all life stages and should be supplemented and fed in a rotational diet to cover nutrient requirements. We offer support to create personalized meal plans for puppies with more specific needs.

5. Does Big Country Raw Have Options for Dogs Suffering From Severe Food Allergies?

Yes. In fact, many customers will switch to feeding raw as a potential solution for known or suspected food allergies. Our Pure formulas are a single protein, with no supplements or vegetables added, meaning they include strictly meat, organ, and bones from one single animal source. This is the ideal solution for an elimination diet. Our Pure formulation options include novel proteins such as kangaroo and rabbit.

6. How Do I Safely Transition My Pet to a Raw Diet?

It was commonly believed that a fasting period of 24 hours is the best way to transition from kibble to raw. However, at Big Country Raw, we believe that 24 hours without food might be unnecessary. This especially applies to a dog who has never fasted before, and we do not recommend any type of fasting for cats. For dogs, it is possible to transition one of two ways: short fast (8-12 hours) or progressive transition (slowly adding raw to the kibble for a period of 7 to 10 days). The second option is also what works best for cats. Cats could also benefit from a transition of kibble to canned food, then canned food to raw.

7. Can Raw be Suitable for Dogs with Thyroid Issues?

Yes. Depending on if the pet is suffering from hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism, we have options with iodine (Dinners) or without (Pures and Blends). Simply avoid recipes with added kelp or supplements including kelp when feeding your pet suffering from hyperthyroid.

8. Can Raw and Kibble be Mixed?

For most dogs and cats, yes. Mixing both foods in the same, or in separate meals works just fine. The benefits of raw (smaller stools for example) can be seen at just 20% raw in the diet. Big Country Raw offers a large variety of toppers and side dishes, like our Superfood Blend and Quail Eggs, that can easily be added to kibble. If a customer wants to include more than 20% raw, then they should choose a complete diet like our Dinner formulations to make sure the whole diet will stay balanced. The myth that raw and kibble can't be mixed is based on the false assumption around the variation of stomach pH and digestion rate of ingredients. In fact, in both kibble and raw there are ingredients that have different pH requirements and digestion rates. The body is able to adapt and digest all types of food, with the exception of extremely sensitive individuals.

9. Are Thrive Supplements Under Any Regulation?

Yes. Thrive supplements are approved by Health Canada, under Veterinary Health Products. All claims are approved, and each label identified with their Notification Number (NN).

10. Are All Thrive Supplements Suitable For Cats?

Yes, they all are suitable for cats, with the exception of Pumpkin Powder and Golden Paste. Too much pumpkin, due to its high fiber content, can be anti-nutritional for other nutrients, such as taurine and zinc. A cat's diet high in fiber, or including fruits and vegetables, needs to be formulated accordingly. The impact of those vegetable ingredients on the digestibility of the food must be considered. Golden Paste is not considered suitable as it contains cinnamon which is not approved for cats by Health Canada.

11. Why Don't We Put Fish Oil in Our Meals?

Fish oil is prone to oxidation, and we want to preserve the quality of the fatty acids. Exposing oil to air, mixing it with meat and other ingredients, then freezing it, can damage these fatty acids. Big Country Raw's choice also allows customers to rotate between the oils and whole fish, each having their own beneficial properties.

12. Are There Recipes Formulated Specifically for Cats?

Yes. Raw can be very beneficial for cats with its high animal protein, high moisture, and very low carb content. But cats have specific dietary requirements and the Fare Game recipes have been specifically formulated to meet them. Cats can also enjoy a rotational diet of Pures and Blends when correctly supplemented.

13. Is Fare Game Okay for Small Dogs as Well?

Yes, the packaging makes it easier to use for small dogs, but you might want to add Superfood Blend or Vita Nutrition Fermented Vegetables for extra fiber. Little dogs tend to do better with higher fiber in the diet.

14. Are Dinners Suitable for Cats?

No. Cats are obligate carnivores. Dogs can eat cat food but not the opposite. Fruits and vegetables lower the overall digestibility of the diet for cats. High carb and fiber cat food should be balanced accordingly by increasing the amounts of certain nutrients that have a lower digestibility because of the additional ingredients.

15. Can BCR Products be Thawed and Refrozen?

Yes. Since Big Country Raw products have never been thawed from the making of the product to its arrival in your freezer, it is safe to thaw it once and freeze it again. Ideally, meals that are thawed to be portioned and re-frozen should be thawed in the refrigerator and consumed within 24 hours.

16. Raw Diets, Taurine, and DCM: What There is to Know

To summarize the multiple FDA reports about food-induced Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM), findings first targeted grain-free diets then, after first report conclusions were reconsidered and no real link was found between grain-free diets and DCM. Regardless, if food-induced DCM is related to taurine levels or taurine absorption, raw is not affected by it. The reason is simple; the highest source of taurine is found in meat, especially organ meat. A raw diet with 70%-80% meat is naturally very high in taurine, as well as taurine precursors. There are also no taurine binding elements in Big Country Raw diets that could lower the absorption. There are no grains, no legumes and no peas. The product is not cooked and contains no phytates. As well, the food is vacuum-sealed to minimize oxidation. To exemplify this, with their high proportion of meat and organs, Big Country Raw's Fare Game line has 4 times the minimum taurine requirement for cats.

17. Can Big Country Raw be Cooked?

No. Big Country Raw diets all include bones for calcium and once cooked, bones become undigestible. Cooked bones can also cause digestive issues, blockages, and mineral deficiencies. Big Country Raw has the CookHouse line which is a complete diet for adult and senior dogs, already cooked and can be warmed for picky eaters or those with sensitive digestion.

18. What Protein has the Smallest Bone Pieces?

Red meat recipes have the lowest bone content. Beef is ideal for dogs or cats who have difficulty with bone pieces as bone dust is used. However, the smallest sieve is used for the Fare Game formulas.

19. How are the Fruits and Vegetables Chosen in the Dinner Recipes?

Fruits and vegetables are chosen for their high nutritional values, fiber and antioxidant content, as well as their low sugar and low glycemic index. Dogs can very easily get their required energy from protein and fat, and do not require sugar in their diet. Dinners can even be suitable for dogs with controlled diabetes.

20. Does Big Country Raw Offer Support to Customers as Well as Veterinarians and Other Health Professionals Regarding Raw Food?

Yes. There are many ways to reach out to Big Country Raw. Customers can request a personalized meal plan for free at any time directly on the website. There is also a form to talk to our pet nutrition expert directly for more specific questions. During regular business hours, it is also possible to call Big Country Raw and talk to a customer service agent. For veterinarians and pet health professionals, Julie, Kelly or Rachel, our pet nutrition experts are available via phone or email for immediate support.

Have a question not listed here? Reach out to our team:
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