

# RAW PET DIGEST

August/September 2015

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Turner, a Shetland Sheepdog.  
Photo credit: Jill Ermel



One of the things I wanted to do when I created Raw Pet Digest was bring you interviews and other information from experts in natural healthcare and feeding of our carnivore pets. Thomas Sandberg is one such expert—his research into natural feeding has helped him double the life expectancy of his Great Danes, reduce cancer rates, and help his dogs thrive. He didn't stop there, though—as you will see, he is leading a long-range study on the effects of a species-appropriate diet vs other types of diets on 1,000 dogs. I found his insights fascinating, and I was able to learn some things from him. I hope you enjoy the interview as much as I did. And if, after reading it, you are interested in participating in his study, you can get more information about how to participate at his website: [www.longlivingpets.com](http://www.longlivingpets.com).

*1. I know that you first became interested in raw feeding because you wanted your Great Danes to live longer. I also know that you are passionate about understanding cancer in our dogs. In your opinion, how does a raw diet aid both longevity and overall health?*

Yes, the short lifespan of giant breeds like Great Danes always puzzled me. When I asked why they had short lifespans, I was always given reasons like: "They are genetically disposed to a shorter lifespan," "Their hearts are too small for their huge bodies," or "That's just the way it is." I never

got a reason that made sense to me. It occurred to me that the aging process seems to progressively escalate in larger dogs compared to smaller ones. What causes this process to speed up in larger dogs? This is not the norm in the animal kingdom. Many huge animals live very long lives. For example, elephants can live on average for 60 years, some whales live over 200 years, gorillas can live for 50 years, and lions can live 15-18 years in the wild and 20-25 years in captivity. What is the one thing all of these animals have in common? They eat the food they are designed for by nature. When we change this, we interfere with nature and there are consequences to that. We humans caused incredible damage to our pets when we altered their food to make life more convenient for ourselves. I believe this is the main cause for the shorter lifespan in large breeds. Large dogs need a lot of nutrients to sustain a strong immune system that can reduce the damage from free radicals. Smaller dogs appear to manage this better, but they really do not. I believe smaller dogs can also live much longer if they are fed the right food.

To find out if my theory had any merit to it, I decided to start this 30-year-long study. I initially wanted to only use my own dogs, since I truly did not know the long-term effects of this type of feeding. When I decided, after studying the digestive system of carnivores down to cellular



Camelot, a Great Dane. Photo credit: Thomas Sandberg



Meshach, a Great Dane. Photo credit: Kim Bloomer



levels, to drop all vegetables and fruits, I was definitely concerned. I did not want to suggest this to others before I knew more. I did not announce my study to anyone, but one by one other pet owners found out about my research and wanted to be a part of it. After about 3 years I had 80 dogs participating. Most participants fed a mix of raw and some vegetables; only a dozen fed meat exclusively.

After a few years I was convinced that longevity and good health are mostly related to what types of food we feed our pets. What makes this obvious is when we compare pets on commercial "dog food" with pets on raw food diets. This becomes quite evident when pets are switched from kibble to raw food. Amazing improvements are the norm here. How veterinarians can ignore this blows my mind. I have hundreds of stories that clearly show that switching to a raw food diet fixed a number of issues that drugs and medication prescribed by veterinarians did not fix. In fact, in many cases, the drugs and medications prescribed by veterinarians ultimately made it worse.

I'm in the process of collecting some of these success stories on a new website: [petsloverawfood.com](http://petsloverawfood.com). The plan is to send concerned people there to read these real-life stories and hopefully encourage them to switch. I have not come up with anything new, nor am I following a newly found fad. What I believe in has been available for thousands of years. Commercial dog food was invented in the 1800s! So what is the fad here? All I have done is go back to nature.

If dogs came with an instruction manual on how to take care of them, we all would have done the right thing. That manual would have told us what we should feed to keep our pet's organs working properly and to sustain a strong and effective immune system. In short it would say: feed your dogs a variety of raw meats and edible bones. How nice would it be if all dogs came with a quick-start guide saying:

### ***Instructions: Read Before Feeding Me!***

***You will learn how to make me live a long and healthy life that will also save you thousands of dollars in veterinary expenses.***

That's why I wrote my book, *Learn How to Add Years to Your Dog's Life!*, which is a simple manual to help you get your pet started on a raw food diet. All living creatures have digestive systems that are designed for certain foods, and our carnivore pets are no exception. When the right food passes through a dog's digestive system, it provides all the vital nutrients needed to sustain a strong immune system. In my opinion, it is the health of the immune system that is the main factor in a dog's ability to stay healthy and live longer. Dogs are carnivores and require a carnivorous diet: a variety of meats and edible bones. There is no way around this if you want your dog's health to be optimal.

For longevity, a raw food diet reduces premature aging by limiting the damage that free radicals cause. It also promotes a healthy pancreas, which provides a dog with most of the vital enzymes necessary for good digestion, and a solid immune system that can fight off diseases like cancer. I believe cancer is a metabolic disease and can be prevented and, in many



Thomas with his Great Danes. Photo credit: Thomas Sandberg



cases, cured metabolically. Cancer cells are different from normal cells. The damage is mostly done to their mitochondria; they lose their ability to metabolize fat. Normal cells can burn energy from both sugar and fat. This has been proven in scientific studies by [Thomas Seyfried](#). This damage to the respiration in cancer cells gives us a unique opportunity to kill cancer cells by reducing the glycogen production that cancer depends on to survive and multiply. In short, the best prevention against cancer is to feed a raw food diet very low in carbohydrates. When damage to a normal cell causes that cell to become a cancer cell (which happens all the time) a strong and healthy immune system will act on these cells and prevent them from becoming full-blown, out-of-control cancer cells. This is how it works in humans and dogs when they have a healthy immune system. The problem occurs when we feed dogs food they were never designed for. Over time, the pancreas suffers from trying to handle this "wrong" food and loses its ability to function at an optimal level and produce vital and necessary enzymes. That compromises the immune system, which in turn increases the cancer cells' chances of surviving, multiplying, and metastasizing.

*2. Do you have any specific ideas on why diseases like cancer are appearing in our dogs at younger and younger ages?*

Other than processed food causing a compromised immune system, I think vaccines are one of the main reasons. I have seen the pressure to vaccinate dogs increase significantly over the last decade. I get emails several times a year from my veterinarian recommending I bring my dogs in to get vaccinated for one disease or another. This is often combined with a horror story about dogs that supposedly got ill or suffered because they did not take the vaccine(s). I'm appalled and disgusted with this growing trend. I'm convinced that vaccines can cause cancer, and if the dog is also on a

kibble-type diet, the immune system is already weakened and the risk of cancer developing increases even more. To further complicate this, we know that the blood of our dogs is hereditarily contaminated with vaccine viruses several generations back. This makes it even more important to feed a diet that promotes a strong immune system. I can't stress this enough: there is no better defense against cancer than a strong immune system. The immune system is the body's natural defense, which no artificial drugs can ever match. In a human body there are approximately 75,000 enzymes. I have never seen the number for dogs, but it can't be that far off. Enzymes can only be maintained and produced by the body itself. There is no medication or drug that can accomplish what nature can do. But nature needs the right raw materials to do that; that's why it is so important feed the right food.

*3. There are lots of raw diet philosophies out there (commercially prepared raw, prey model raw, a mix of raw foods that are cut up for the animal, etc.). Have you found one type that you prefer? If so, which one? Does it ever depend on the dog (size, breed, activity level)?*

I know this is a controversial topic and some do not agree with me. By the way, I don't ever tell people what to feed. I think most raw food diets are better than commercial kibble-type diets by far. Personally, I don't feed any vegetables or fruits, nor have I for over 15 years. After studying the digestive system very carefully, I don't see any evidence that dogs need vegetable and fruits. I personally believe veggies and fruits put stress on the pancreas, since it has to struggle with food it was never meant to deal with. I don't know how much damage, if any, this can do to a dog, since there is no research done on this that I am aware of. I never tell anyone to drop the veggies and fruits, but I let them know I did that 15 years ago and my dogs have never had an issue with it. Some well-known professionals, however, are very vocal about this and do not agree with me; they say it is straight-out harmful to eliminate plant materials. This is another part of what I am studying and hope



to produce more data on. But back to your question. I'm mostly concerned with what goes into the stomach of a dog or cat, not how this food is fed. Whether that food is fed prey-model style or cut up in pieces is of less importance to me. Not everyone finds prey-model-type feeding feasible and will not do it. I have something I promote called "raw in a bowl" for those that can't stand the thought of "prey model raw" or "franken prey" type feeding. "Raw in a bowl" is a mix of raw meat, organ meat, and edible bones. I have found that many that are reluctant to feed raw like to start out with this, since it is cleaner and it is also easier to balance the ratio of meats, organs, and bones. To a new raw feeder, it looks more balanced and gives them some comfort in the sense that their dog is getting a healthy mix of food. I have no problem with this type of feeding since it eventually gives the dog's digestive system what it needs. I have also accepted dogs in my study that are on several premade/packed commercially made raw food. I don't know enough to recommend any brand. I'm curious to see the results. I know for some it is a challenge to feed homemade raw food, and the commercial raw food products do have a place since it is better than feeding kibble for sure. It's also another alternative to get people eased into the world of raw feeding.

*4. I saw on your website that you spent 15 years researching raw feeding in dogs. Can you describe how you did this research? What specifically were you studying? How many dogs were involved?*

For the first 15 years, I followed 80 dogs that were fed a raw food diet. These owners reported to me once a year. They basically gave me the health condition of their dogs. None of them had any severe health issues and so far only one has died of cancer. The study is too small for any serious conclusions. It was a pre-study to first of all make sure I was not doing any damage to my dogs. I was a bit concerned when I dropped the veggies and fruits after 6 months since I did not know anyone that had done that. They thrived on

it; in fact, their poop got much better and some itching issues that one of my Danes had ended. When I saw the same trend in others, I started to become increasingly aware of how raw food diets were superior to commercial dog food and how damaging kibble-type diets were to dogs and cats. Based on the results from the first 15 years, I decided to increase this study in numbers to give it more validity and to confirm the trends I saw from the first 15 years. I tried to find people or companies to fund this, but after 3 years I gave that up and decided to continue to do this on my own. This has become my life mission, since I can't just sit back and do nothing with the knowledge I have gained. I have spent most of my life savings but I know somehow it will be well worth it. If I die poor but have helped some pets live a longer healthier life and dodge cancer I'm all good. I really want to show how raw food can drastically reduce the risk of cancer by providing numbers that will be much lower than the current cancer rate of 50%. My prediction is that raw fed dogs can reduce instances of cancer to under 10%. I know this sounds unbelievable to many people, but I firmly believe it, and I'm confident I will have the numbers to back it up.

This study of course is not a scientific study. I never claimed it was, but that is what the opponents of raw feeding use all the time to discredit me. They know very well that no raw food study will ever take place in a true unbiased scientific trial since



Meshach as a puppy enjoying his dinner. Photo credit: Kim Bloomer



nobody will back this up financially. If there ever were to be one, I can't imagine anyone willing to invest millions of dollars into a study like this without benefiting from the results in some way. As the raw feeding community grows, at some point the billion-dollar commercial dog food industry may say enough is enough and put forth a study that disproves the benefits of raw feeding. However, that's a study I would be very skeptical about. I'd rather get real-life stories from real-life pet owners that feed raw. These are the type of testimonials I like to see and am collecting, instead of results produced by studies tainted by possible financial gain or interest. Raw feeding is a grass-roots movement. Changes will come from below, not from the top down. We're fighting the powerful commercial dog food manufacturers and the veterinarians that are against raw feeding. This will take time, but I already see changes that are very encouraging. We are at a point where we no longer can be ignored. There are just too many stories that confirm pets thrive on raw food. I get approached by veterinarians that are curious about what I do. Some are even sending their cancer cases to me. Their problem is the same: they can't use what I have discovered since it is not scientifically proven. Some still very much like to support me, but they prefer to stay behind the scenes for now. However, I see a change coming soon.

*5. In the next phase, I know you are following 1,000 dogs that are fed a variety of raw diets. What sort of information are you hoping to learn in this phase? Can people still sign up, and if so, how?*

I hope to confirm my initial findings that a balanced raw food diet is superior to commercial dog food. The most interesting information to me will be to see the number of dogs that get cancer. Statistically it should be half of them. I'm confident this number will be 80-90% lower. I can't wait to see what the veterinary community will come up with to discredit these real-life numbers. Again, I know they will call this a non-scientific study, and they are correct, but still

these numbers cannot be ignored. Secondly, I hope to see an improvement in the average lifespan of pets. I will compare this with current expected lifespan statistics. Other statistics I will look at are: diabetes; heart disease; diseases to organs like the liver, heart, and kidneys; autoimmune disorders; periodontal diseases; and more. In short, any disease that has a statistic is of interest to me to track and compare. This data will mostly be collected at the time of death, so this will not be available for quite some time. Yes, people can still sign up. If they are interested, they can go to my website, [www.longlivingpets.com](http://www.longlivingpets.com), for more information. I may go past the 1,000 if I can find time and get some funding support.

*6. How long do you find, on average, that raw-fed Great Danes and other large dogs live on a raw fed diet? What about small dogs?*

I have seen a trend so far that healthy Danes fed raw early in life can almost double the expected lifespan of 6-8 years. Smaller dogs can also extend their lives significantly in my opinion. I predict that in the future we will see many small raw-fed dogs living into their mid-20s. This is something my study should confirm. I have hundreds of small dogs participating.

*7. Have you done any studies on generations of naturally reared dogs? Do you consistently find that later generations of naturally reared dogs live longer, healthier lives than others?*

I have many naturally reared dogs on my study. It is too early to see any trends, but I suspect this to be very beneficial to their health and longevity.

*8. Do you look at vaccine usage or other chemical usage in the pets you've studied, or are you solely focused on feeding as the variable you're studying?*

Yes, I track vaccines in all dogs. This is done at a later point, however (mostly at the time they pass away). I do however encourage minimal vaccination, or preferably none at all. I also try to track what type of environment they spent most of their lives in. I encourage pet owners with yards and lawns to not use chemicals.



9. *What sort of results have you found regarding vaccine usage? Do vaccines negatively impact a pet's longevity and health?*

From all the dogs I have helped that have cancer, I definitely see a trend. Most of these dogs have been vaccinated multiple times. Several got cancer shortly after their vaccination. I can't make any definite conclusions, but I'm tracking this very carefully. I do suspect that many vaccines are damaging to a pet's immune system. This makes sense, since most of these vaccines are poisonous. In my opinion, the mix of kibble and vaccination is a bad, and often lethal, combination.

10. *What sort of proteins do you typically feed your Great Danes? Can you describe a typical day in their diet?*

I feed a variety of proteins, but mostly chicken, pork, turkey, beef, and lamb. I also feed chicken and turkey gizzards, and I feed liver and spleen most often for organ meat. I also give eggs and sardines on a regular basis. A typical meal is a mix of these foods.

11. *What are your thoughts about fasting? Do you fast your own dogs?*

Yes, fasting is very important. I fast my dogs every 3-4 months for 2-3 days. Then I calorie restrict their food by 30-40% for 3-4 days. So altogether, there are 7 days every 3-4 months that are



The pack out for a walk in the snow. Photo credit: Thomas Sandberg

different from my ordinary feeding regimen. Feeding, fasting, and calorie restricting this way puts the dogs in ketosis and flushes out cancer cells. I recommend this to everyone. It is also very beneficial to do this when switching a dog to raw from kibble. Fasting, then a calorie-restricted diet, is also the first step in my cancer protocol. This has shown to be very effective in stopping cancer growth.

12. *Do you have any tips for people that are getting into raw feeding, specifically about finding good meat suppliers?*

This is always a challenge. If you live in or close to a large city you can find good sources. The internet or other raw feeders in your area are great sources of information. You can google raw feeding groups and your city.

13. *How important is it for meat to be organic, hormone-free/antibiotic-free, and pasture-raised? Does your study look at the differences between raw-fed dogs that are fed meat with hormones and antibiotics vs dogs that are fed meat that is hormone and antibiotic-free?*

Ideally, we all want to feed organic meats. I personally can't afford that, so I feed meats from the grocery store; this is part of my study. I have a small group that feeds organic food that I track. The reality is that very few can afford this.

14. *I saw on your website that you discuss the need for supplements. What sort of supplements do you recommend? Why are supplements important if the dog is getting a raw-fed diet?*

Since I don't feed my dogs organic meats, I do supplement them. I regularly give:

- Apricot seeds for cancer prevention
- Omega 3s to balance out the omega 6s found in meats
- Coconut oil for the MCT oil (60%): since I don't feed any carbs my dogs are in low ketosis, which in short mean they are fat burners. The MCT oil bypasses the digestive system and goes straight to the liver, where it is converted to ketone

bodies. This is an excellent source for cellular energy metabolism. The great thing about this is that cancer cells cannot metabolize on fat—they need sugar. Since I don't provide that, cancer cannot survive. This is in my opinion the best protection against cancer.

- Essiac Tea (maintenance dose): I brew this myself from a reliable source that makes their product from the 8-herb-formula recipe developed by Rene Caisse (not her 4-herb-formula recipe). These herbs have many important vitamins and nutrients. This tea is also a great detox protocol to give to pets that were on a kibble diet.
- Diatomaceous earth

*15. I recently read an article from a vet that argued that there are lots of chemicals found in soil that find their way into grasses and other plants consumed by herbivores. These herbivores then get the chemicals in their bodies, and these are concentrated even more in the carnivores that eat them. The article then went on to say that, for this reason, feeding our dogs a vegan (or at least a vegetarian diet) was safest for them. What is your response to this? What do you say to people who are concerned about the chemicals and toxins that herbivores are exposed to?*

The first part may have some truth to it, but the soil has an amazing ability to cleanse itself. It is true, however, that there are chemicals that can't be broken down and end up in the meat. How much this damages our dogs is impossible to tell. But, using that as a reason to feed a dog a vegan or vegetarian diet is absolutely ludicrous to me. A carnivore's digestive system is not designed for that type of food and lacks many of the enzymes needed to break this food. For example, carnivores do not have nearly enough amylase to effectively break down cellulose. Also, the digestive tract of a carnivore is much too short to handle plant materials. Feeding this type of diet is very upsetting to me. I know that some people, including veterinarians, are misinformed and believe this is a good food alternative.

*16. Why do you think that there is a common myth that dogs are omnivores and should be fed fruits and vegetables (and even grains)?*

I think this misinformation comes from sources like dog food manufacturers and veterinarians. The majority of pet owners still trust these. Look at dog food manufacture's websites; they claim dogs are omnivores and cite misinformed medical professionals. I won't call them liars but they come darn close. I have written to several of these manufacturers and asked for proof, but I have never heard back from any of them.

*17. I have had many different people tell me that their vets told them that their specific breed of dog cannot digest meat and proteins as well as other breeds, and so they should focus on feeding fruits and vegetables. Have you ever come across any breed that does not digest meat, bones, organs, and glands well? Why do you think that vets are saying this? I have heard this about Rottweilers, Labradors, Dachshunds, Terriers, and Australian Shepherds, so it's a pretty wide range.*

I've never seen an instance where a particular breed does not handle raw food appropriately as long as I have been involved with raw feeding. This makes no sense to me since I don't see any difference in a dog's digestive system regardless of breed and size. I'm not sure how this came about, but I suspect it came from someone that did not like to feed raw. I have two Dachshunds that were switched to raw when they were 8 and 11 years old, and they thrive on it. They lost 5 pounds each, they have more muscle mass now, and their stamina has greatly improved. They eat meat, organs, and edible bones, and they can digest everything perfectly.

*18. What do you say to someone who is nervous to make the switch from feeding kibble to feeding a species-appropriate diet?*

Buy my book! Haha! But seriously, I wrote this book specifically for all those sitting on the fence. They know the benefits of raw feeding but are scared that they will not do it right and harm their



pet. Too many books have been written about raw feeding that make the process of switching and maintaining much too complicated; this scares pet owners and stops them from switching. It really is quite simple, especially when you take out the carbs as I and many others do. Start with one meat type (most people choose chicken), then add other meat types every 3-5 days. You can also give a mix of raw right from the get-go. Many dogs can handle that just fine (all of mine did). I recommend making the switch after fasting for a day or two. As a general rule, don't mix kibble and raw, as they are two completely different food types. Only mix them if the dog absolutely won't take to raw after 4-5 days of trying.

*19. I saw on your website that you take your dogs for a medical exam each year. What does the exam involve?*

A full blood panel unless I suspect anything else. So far I have had no issues.

*20. What differences do you see, physiologically, between kibble-fed dogs and raw-fed dogs?*

So many things! The main thing, and in my opinion the most important thing, is that we see a much better immune system in raw-fed dogs. This is a result of healthier organs. Another important factor is less damage from free radicals, which helps slow down the aging process. Other obvious things are more muscle mass, shinier coats, cleaner teeth, and less poop. I could go on and on.

In 99% of the cancer cases I get, the dogs have been fed kibble most of their lives, so that is another thing I track carefully. I know of a few raw-fed dogs that have gotten cancer, but they were also fed veggies. I'm not ready to make any conclusions from that, but so far I have not seen a dog on an all-raw-meat-no-veggies diet with cancer. Therefore, in my opinion, the best defense against cancer is a carb-free diet. I'm not alone in suggesting this. There are several studies and trials going on that will back this up. Some are with dogs

that already have cancer: they are being fed a calorie-restricted ketogenic diet (no carbs) combined with hyperbaric oxygen therapy. This study is showing some very promising results.

*21. What are your thoughts on exercise as it relates to natural health?*

Exercise is extremely important for the health of a dog, physically and mentally. They are genetically designed to exercise daily. In the wild, they were always on the move searching for food. The need for this has not changed.

*22. You recently enrolled in the American Council of Animal Naturopathy certification program. What do you hope to learn or achieve through the program?*

I hope to learn more about natural healing and hopefully help people understand that there are powerful alternatives to standards of care when it comes to keeping pets healthy and healing them naturally if they become ill. Too often we run to our vet as soon as an issue occurs instead of giving nature a chance to heal our pets. We all know how quickly vets can write prescriptions, which often are temporary fixes at best and often end up making things even worse.

*23. I saw that you have various projects going on for which you are asking for public funding. What does the funding you get from people go for? Is it tax-deductible?*

At this time, the funding goes to me so I can free up more time from my regular work. I've funded this research project for over 15 years myself and have spent thousands of hours managing it. Adding 1,000 dogs to my project completely overwhelmed me. I need to allocate much more time to this study now. Due to my use of amygdalin in cancer therapy and prevention, I can't set up a nonprofit organization. It gets tricky getting it approved. I have tried for 6 years. My funding campaign is on GoFundMe: <http://www.gofundme.com/longlivingpets>



24. *Is there anything else you would like to share?*

I want to mention that I may come down hard on veterinarians. I have several that I have become very good friends with that do an amazing job with animals. They are some of the most intelligent people I know. They have saved my dogs' and cats' lives more than once. I'm forever grateful for that. They are also the first ones to admit that dog nutrition is a subject that they did not study much during their education. It's just not a priority, which is really sad.

One last thing. We pet owners that care about our dogs deeply and understand how important the

right food is for our pets are still a tiny minority. We need to stay together against the growing false and misleading propaganda that opponents of raw feeding are publishing. The internet is a fantastic medium for us to share what we are so passionate about. Unfortunately, it is also a fantastic medium for spreading false information, lies, and conspiracy theories. Many buy into these and share them so they spread quickly and become impossible to control. That's why I'm so pleased that a magazine like this exists. Thanks for publishing this; I know it is a lot of work.

-By Kristin Clark



Thomas and his dogs. Photo credit: Thomas Sandberg