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**HOW
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FOGLE TO
MEET HIS
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By his Dad, Bruce!

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Bones of contention

SO YOU'VE READ THE ARGUMENTS and done the research; you know about the criticisms of grain-based cooked processed foods; the importance of a balanced, varied diet; the safe handling techniques for raw meat and the risks of feeding bones... and you've decided: you're going for it - you're going to switch to a raw diet for your beloved pooch.

So what now? Rush off and fill your trolley with steak fillets and salad lettuce? Actually, it may not be that simple. You see, there are strong disagreements over the correct way to feed raw: what kind of meat and bones? What vegetables and fruits? Should you add supplements? And can you add 'people food'? For a newcomer the confusion can make the switch almost too daunting.

If you are interested in dogs, the acronym BARF may be a familiar term. In fact, I had long assumed it to be synonymous with raw diets and to be widely embraced by all raw feeders. But to advocate a BARF diet to followers of the Raw Meaty Bones Lobby is tantamount to committing heresy, as I found out when I contacted Debbie Wickham of the UK Raw Meaty Bones Support and Action Group and was surprised to be told that they considered BARF as another form of pet junk food and were encouraging remedial action against it! But surely they're the same thing? What was all the fuss about?

The BARF Diet

BARF - WHICH STANDS FOR Bones And Raw Food or Biologically Appropriate Raw Food - is a term created by Dr Ian Billinghurst, an Australian vet whom many credit as being the first to kick-start the raw feeding movement in the early 1980s, when an experience with his own dogs forced him to rethink. After six years in practice, Billinghurst decided to abandon the time-honoured Australian method of feeding a diet of butcher's meat and bone together with human food scraps direct from the table, in favour of the method he had been trained to endorse: grain-based commercial pet food. He was puzzled when his animals' health began to deteriorate and his hunch was proven correct when, very quickly after switching back to his old feeding regime of whole, raw foods, his pets' health improved dramatically.

Eagerly, he began sharing this information with his clients and when they adopted these ideas, Billinghurst noted improvements across a broad spectrum of health issues. He became convinced that many of the disease problems he was seeing were largely due to nothing other than poor nutrition and that many of these diseases could be eliminated, easily and cheaply, by switching animals to a raw whole food diet. Cooking and processing foods to stop spoilage actually results in removing or destroying the very elements that promote health.

Billinghurst's theories were

not well received by the veterinary profession - if not directly refuted, his ideas were largely ignored by his colleagues. Aside from the presence of pet food manufacturers within the profession (eg sponsorship of university lectures) and the general belief that small animal nutrition is the domain of such companies, the idea of trying to prevent disease via nutrition was, and still is, a foreign concept in veterinary circles.

Thus, Billinghurst changed tactics. If he could not convince his fellow vets, he would educate the pet owners directly - and this he did with his first book, *Give Your Dog A Bone* (1993). Through this and subsequent books, Billinghurst's ideas have been adopted by hundreds of pet owners, breeders and even some vets across Australia, the UK, North America and other parts of the world. This has led to a growing awareness of the role of raw whole foods in health.

The core of the BARF diet is raw meaty bones, which should account for approximately 60 per cent of the diet. They should come from a variety of sources, from raw chicken wings to lamb ribs to ox tail, with the occasional large recreational bone. Next, 10-15 per cent of the diet should consist of offal. However - and herein lies the controversy - BARF followers believe that dogs are omnivores and therefore vegetables and fruit are also important. So they recommend that 15-20 per cent of the diet should consist of raw fruit and vegetables, usually pureed to



help make them more digestible. And finally, the remaining percentage of the diet should be made up of human scraps and possibly supplements, such as vitamins, oils and herbs - another area of contention.

In addition, BARF followers believe that if whole bones cannot be given for whatever reason, it is acceptable to provide them in the form of ground bone meal, on the principle that although the dog will be missing out on the physical teeth-cleaning benefits, he will still receive the nutritional benefits of bones, such as essential protein, fatty acids, vitamins and minerals.

The latest advance in the BARF campaign is the development of 'BARF patties' - a ready-made mix of minced raw ingredients, based on a recipe from Billinghurst's book, *The BARF Diet*, which ensures that each patty has the right proportions of the different food types recommended. Available frozen, in sealed packs, they are now being

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commercially produced and offered as an alternative to conventional processed pet foods. As a busy dog owner myself, I was delighted by the thought of being able to follow a healthier feeding regime for my dog but having the 'dirty work' done for me. Surprisingly, the patties have not been universally welcomed. In particular, a group of raw feeders - the Raw Meaty Bones Lobby, led by another vet, Dr Tom Lonsdale - has slated the patties as just another form of canine 'junk food', claiming that they are as harmful as traditional processed pet foods and do not follow the true principles of raw feeding. These are strong accusations, indeed and when I spoke to Dr Billinghurst, he was puzzled by the hostility towards him and his products. "I primarily wanted the BARF patties to make it easier for my clients. People who do not have the time or the inclination to produce this diet

themselves find a commercial raw product not only convenient, but also safe in terms of formulation and source. This has made raw feeding much more accessible and allowed more pets to enjoy the benefits of raw feeding."

"There are a few people who have a problem with raw feeding being commercialised," Dr Billinghurst acknowledged. "However, from my point of view that is idealistic naiveté. My whole thrust has always been to see as many pets as possible have access to food that will improve their health, happiness and longevity. In the absence of commercial raw food products, only a small percentage of pet owners will bother to feed a raw food diet because of the time and effort involved in its preparation. Clearly, the properly constructed home-produced raw food diet is the gold standard. However, a well-constructed commercial product is 1,000 per cent better than killer kibble." >



The overall diet for dogs should consist of approx 60 per cent raw meaty bones, 15-20 per cent fruit and vegetables, 10-15 per cent offal, together with 5-10 per cent human food scraps and/or other supplements.

SAMPLE MENU FOR AN ADULT DOG FOR ONE WEEK

MONDAY

AM: Raw meaty bones - chicken wings or backs or necks

PM: Ground beef, vegetable mix, cod liver oil, salmon oil, egg, kelp/alfafa

TUESDAY

AM: Raw meaty bones - lamb ribs or lamb neck or 'Dr Billingham's Lamb Meat & Bone Mince'

PM: Chopped liver, vegetable/fruit mix, salmon oil, kelp/alfafa, vitamin E

WEDNESDAY

AM: Large recreational bone and chicken wing(s)

PM: Raw meaty bones - chicken wings, backs or necks

THURSDAY

AM: Raw meaty bones - lamb or pork necks or ox tail or 'Dr Billingham's Lamb Meat & Bone Mince'

PM: Vegetable mix with tinned fish, salmon oil, vitamin E, kelp/alfafa

FRIDAY

AM: Raw meaty bones - chicken wings or backs or necks

PM: Ground beef with chopped heart, flax/alfafa mix, vitamin E, cod liver oil, salmon oil

SATURDAY

AM: Large recreational bone and chicken wing(s)

Sat PM: Ground turkey meat, vegetable mix, cod liver oil, salmon oil, egg, vitamin E

SUNDAY

AM: Raw meaty bones - lamb or pork necks or ox tail or 'Dr Billingham's Lamb Meat & Bone Mince'

PM: Ground beef, vegetable/fruit mix, chopped kidney, vitamin E, evening primrose/borage oil

(Kindly reproduced with permission from The BARF Diet, by Dr Ian Billingham)

For more information, please refer to the following books by Dr Ian Billingham:

- Give Your Dog A Bone
- The BARF Diet
- Grow Your Pup With Bones

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Perhaps, I suggested, the objections were not only towards the commercial nature of the patties but to the actual ingredients inside them, specifically the significant percentage of vegetable and fruit matter.

"There are people who question whether we should be feeding dogs vegetables. They will claim that dogs are pure carnivores and they will claim that wolves - the species from which our modern dogs have evolved or descended - are pure carnivores. Neither claim is correct," Dr Billingham insisted. "Both dogs and wolves are omnivores, but the wolf is more closely aligned with carnivory than the dog. The dog, in evolving away from the wolf, did so on the rubbish heaps of mankind over the last 15,000 years. During this period, the dog as scavenger became more of a vegetable eater, more of a bone eater and more coprophagic [eats more faeces] than the wolf. Modern dogs will still, as a group, hunt in packs, but in general, they are now far more adapted to a more scavenging way of life, well able to eat, and requiring, for maximum health, a diet higher in vegetable matter (including fruit), compared to the wolf. In other words, dogs don't just tolerate vegetables; they actually need vegetables in order to avoid the degenerative disease processes which impact modern dogs so heavily."

Currently, Dr Billingham is working on a book showing the role that vegetables play in both preventing and treating canine cancer and other degenerative diseases, such as inflammatory bowel disease, arthritis, kidney disease, diabetes etc.

The other criticism of the patties involves the inclusion of supplements, such as vitamins, herbs and oils. But Dr Billingham defends this, saying, "For most dogs, just the basic BARF diet of raw meaty bones, vegetable material and offal is perfectly adequate, but some dogs - for example, if they are old or ill or immune-compromised - may need extra help. So in these cases, adding mineral and vitamin supplements or herbs and oils can be very beneficial, as long as supplementation is not excessive and it's done with understanding." Dr Billingham's book, *The BARF Diet*, includes an extensive chapter on supplementation and how to do it correctly.

So perhaps the main objection to the patties is the fact that the ingredients are all minced (including ground-up bone) and so dogs eating

those patties would be missing out on the vital teeth-cleaning action of chewing on whole raw meaty bones?

"I always recommend that when pet owners are feeding the commercial products, they feed half raw meaty bones and half patties," said Dr Billingham. "This allows dogs to access the many benefits of eating bones whole and raw. However, there are many dogs whose owners will not feed whole bones at all; they simply refuse to take the chance of feeding bones because of the small risk involved. Additionally, some individual pets - for a whole variety of reasons - cannot consume whole bones. The bottom line is, for those owners who either can't or don't want to feed whole bones, the patties on their own provide a perfect solution. While dogs which do not get to gnaw on whole bones will miss out on the physical and psychological benefits this brings, they at least benefit from the enormous nutritional benefits." Apparently, carnivores in zoos fed a diet of ground-up raw food show no periodontal disease, implying that the chemical nature of raw foods plays a role in the prevention of gum disease, even if the physical cleaning benefits (from gnawing bones) are missing.

These differences all seem too trivial to cause the deep divide within the raw feeding movement, and I asked Dr Billingham why there should be such a rift. Surely, their voice would be stronger if they were united instead of fighting amongst themselves?

Dr Billingham is equally bewildered. "I don't really believe there is a difference! I think we are saying the same things." He was, he told me, originally part of the Raw Meaty Bones Lobby and close allies with Dr Tom Lonsdale. While he was trying to spread the message to the veterinary profession via his articles on nutrition, Lonsdale was also doing the same but focusing more on the ill-health caused by periodontal disease. However, soon after, their paths diverged as their chosen approaches differed.

"Tom is very angry with pet food companies and anyone who will recommend or produce harmful foods for pets, and rightly so," said Dr Billingham. "He is quite confrontational with the veterinary profession and with pet food companies, whereas I'm not really a political animal. My aim is to educate people and I think I can be of more value to pet owners by remaining in the profession and educating whoever will listen... whether it's pet owners,



Raw Meaty Bones Lobby

A MORE PRO-ACTIVE stance is held by the followers of the Raw Meaty Bones Lobby, led by Dr Tom Lonsdale. British-born Lonsdale trained at the Royal Veterinary College, University of London, but emigrated to Australia in 1980 where he set up a small group of veterinary practices on the outskirts of Sydney. Over the course of the next 10 years, Lonsdale was horrified by the increasing number of young animals at the practice showing signs of premature aging and chronic ill-health (in particular foul breath, rotting teeth and bleeding gums) - coinciding, he believed, with the introduction of processed pet foods to Australia.

Lonsdale's belief was strengthened when several clients, on his recommendation, changed their pets' diets from dry and canned foods to things like raw chicken carcasses, kangaroo tails and whole rabbits - and the improvement in health was instantaneous and astounding.

Western Sydney breeder, Leah Ryan, switched her 20 collies from processed food to mainly meaty bones. The change, she says, slashed her vet bills from AU\$1,000 a month to zero. "I've not had a sick dog since."

As Lonsdale's fascination with periodontal disease grew, so did his distaste for the strong presence of pet food manufacturers in veterinary circles, the rise of lucrative (but in his opinion, avoidable) veterinary dentistry, and the apathy of his veterinary colleagues towards the evidence supporting processed pet foods as the leading cause of disease. This led him to believe that the veterinary profession was 'living a lie' - instead of representing the interests of pets and their owners, the profession had simply become a marketing arm of the pet food industry. As good nutrition (via raw feeding) obviates the need for treatment, he believed that vets were reluctant to support such a feeding regime, as it would do them out of business.

Thus in 1991, together with two other vets, Lonsdale formed the Raw Meaty Bones Lobby, which campaigned for a healthier diet for pets, an end to unnecessary dental procedures, and an end to the veterinary profession's cooperation with pet food manufacturers. Needless to say, the group met with great hostility and Lonsdale has become a controversial figure within veterinary circles, with some labelling him a crank. His attempts to publish articles in professional journals have been rebuffed and his self-published 2001 book,

vets, or even pet food companies."

Thus Billingham's unease with the political activities of the Raw Meaty Bones Lobby led to him resigning from the group in the late 1990s. So did he feel that his gentler approach would eventually succeed? Did he see pet food companies eventually all converting to raw food diets?

"It's always going to be a cost issue," he sighed. "Grain is always cheaper to use in production, so that is what they will want to use, even if it is the wrong diet base for dogs. With raw foods, because the ingredients are superior and therefore more expensive, there will always be lower profit margins. So that is a big obstacle to overcome."

But Billingham is optimistic and still feels that education is the key to a successful revolution. So he continues writing numerous articles on canine nutrition and lecturing at breed clubs, veterinary colleges and to vets worldwide, as well as promoting the BARF message through radio and other media.

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Raw Meaty Bones: Promote Health - detailing the disturbing consequences of a processed diet - has been studiously ignored by the veterinary profession.

Frustrated by the lack of response, Lonsdale called for action on the scientific and consumer fraud perpetrated upon the unsuspecting public by an alliance of pet food companies and vets. Not surprisingly, this led to Lonsdale being expelled from the Australian Veterinary Association. The President of the AVA defended the action, saying only 0.4 per cent of the AVA's annual income comes from manufacturers and that it is certainly not a driver of diet recommendations. Animals fed a pure Lonsdale diet, he added, risk missing out on key nutrients and becoming constipated.

But Lonsdale is undaunted. Despite having to give up his veterinary practice, he continues to spread the word by touring and lecturing, researching and promulgating his theories. If anything, being mocked has only made him more determined - some could even say obsessive. But, as a friend and former vet said, "Being

tiresome doesn't make him wrong."

I certainly got the impression of a man on a crusade when I called Dr Lonsdale to ask him about developments in the raw feeding campaign, in particular Ian Billinghurst's BARF patties. Speaking to Lonsdale, one could instantly feel the differences between the two men: Billinghurst is soft-spoken and mild-mannered, with a dry wit, reminiscent of a patient schoolteacher. Lonsdale's voice, on the other hand, is vibrant and eager, almost evangelical, and brings to mind a passionate preacher.

"The BARFers and their 'vomit patties' are distorting the whole issue! The central core message is that dogs should obtain vital nutrients and vital teeth-cleaning by eating a diet based on raw, meaty bones. Nature provided for dogs to scrub, brush and floss teeth and gums at every feeding session. Without regular teeth-cleaning, foul-smelling gum disease develops - which then leads to diseases of other organs, including the heart, kidneys, liver and immune system. It's irresponsible to suggest grinding the food, especially

the bones, as this removes all the essential teeth-cleaning benefits."

What about adding vegetables and fruits? "Dogs and cats are carnivores! If you look at the jaw structure, the gut structure and the bowel length, it all points to them being carnivores. They wouldn't scavenge in the vegetable patch if given the choice of a meaty bone. And dogs can interbreed with wolves to provide fertile offspring, which demonstrates that they are ultimately the same species. So they have to be fed as carnivores, which means a diet of mainly raw, meaty bones."

As for the addition of supplements, Dr Lonsdale is incensed. "It's a marketing gimmick! Dogs don't need anything more than what's already in a natural diet based on raw meaty bones - adding supplements can actually make them sick. That's just an example of how BARF is more geared towards bogus commercial interest than genuine concern for a dog's health. I mean, there are even pet food companies making these patties now! Billinghurst is just trying to launch his own brand of junk food - he's using the processed industry and exploiting a niche within the larger market. The BARF diet is just as harmful as processed foods."

This sentiment was echoed by Debbie Wickham of the UK Raw Meaty Bones Support and Action Group - a group that once followed the principles of BARF, feeding their pets on frozen packs of ground meat and bone. However, members were still dissatisfied with bad teeth and breath, as well as a host of minor health problems. Then, a chance finding of Lonsdale's book, *Raw Meaty Bones*, led to them having a true 'light bulb' moment.

"We realised how badly we had been misled by the other 'experts', plus learned the whole picture surrounding the feeding of our pets and the effect this has on human health, the economy and the environment. What sense it made - especially about the vital importance of teeth-cleaning," Debbie said. Since then, they have radically changed their feeding regime and denounced the BARF diet. "What could be simpler than throwing down a rabbit or a chicken, a lamb neck or some sardines, a few scraps and some offal for a dog? What is complicated about that, and who benefits? Butchers benefit and dogs certainly benefit - it's the food that they were designed to eat. Now, take a look at BARF. Who benefits? The manufacturer, the supplier and the vet - even Dr Ian Billinghurst, but certainly not the dog. BARF is still within the

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pet food industry and it doesn't have the dog's best interests at heart. The ready-made raw patties even include ingredients such as grains, dairy, fruit, vegetables and supplements that are unnecessary. BARF is sold under the pretence that dogs are omnivores, when they are of course carnivores!"

Lonsdale has written a second book, *Works Wonders* (available as a free download from www.rawmeatybones.com), which not only inspires pet owners to see a dog's dietary needs from a dog's perspective and leads readers through the practical essentials of dog feeding (including how to source, store and prepare raw food) - but also exposes the deficiencies of the commercial BARF diet.

"The biggest obstacle in our fight now is not the processed food people but the BARFers. We're having to fight a rearguard action to undo the bad they've done."

One wonders if Lonsdale's feelings are partly in reaction to Billingham's resignation from the Raw Meaty Bones Lobby, with the desertion being seen as a 'stab in the back'. But it seems this is more than personal. Dr Lonsdale is furious because he feels that BARF has hijacked the whole debate and distracted people from the bigger message. He believes that the raw feeding debate has repercussions beyond the world of pets.

"Billinghurst has dumbed down the whole debate and made the focus on the dog's bowl, when actually what's in the bowl is so trivial in the scheme of things. The conspiracy that is going on between the pet food manufacturers and the veterinary profession; the way pet owners are being conned; the suppression of information about bad nutrition and periodontal disease... this

is such a monstrous issue! It's not only an obligation to fix what's in the dog's bowl but also to fix the larger issues, such as the methodology in pet food research and the teaching practices in vet schools. This is a massive scientific and commercial fraud, which can only be resolved if it is exposed and investigated. It's the biggest fraud of this lifetime!"

It seems that Lonsdale sees himself in the role of a whistleblower, in a situation similar to that involving the tobacco industry. However, he says, Russell Crowe's character in *The Insider* only had to fight the tobacco companies - he didn't have to fight doctors who were working in collusion with the tobacco companies to hide the dangers of nicotine addiction from the public. With implications like these, it's no surprise that Lonsdale is so vilified by the veterinary community. He is aware of this, saying that his articles have been banned and his membership of the AVA cancelled on a bogus complaint, simply as an attempt to silence and discipline the whistleblower.

"Personal attacks are part of the process," says Lonsdale. "I know I can be perceived as abrasive and abrupt - I tend to say what I think - but if a message is important, then it shouldn't matter how it's said - it's the message that's important."

In fact, Lonsdale believes his ideas could have implications for human medicine: periodontal disease has already been shown to have strong links with organ failure and disease in humans, as well as possible premature birth in pregnancy - so if this diet can reverse illness in animals, he says, we should be finding out what the factors are and seeing if they can be applied to people.

SO, AFTER MUCH LONG AND IN-DEPTH RESEARCH, I AM NO CLOSER to a clear solution than I was at the beginning. Like any other complex and controversial topic, every side has its arguments, and its pros and cons. There will always be the extremists who refuse to admit any variation among individual animals, nor the needs and desires of owners, and believe that any problem can be solved by what they deem is the 'correct' diet. And then there are the people in between, from those who occasionally supplement Fido's 'complete and balanced' diet with 'people-food' and feel guilty about it, to those who regularly feed pizza, Big Macs, and French fries to their dogs and can't remember the last time they ate a salad themselves.

At the end of the day, it is your decision and you can only do what you feel is best, in your particular situation. The best solution may be to research thoroughly a number of approaches to canine nutrition, and then experiment to see what suits you and your dog best. ::

Did you miss last month's article about the pros and cons of feeding a raw food diet, including an investigation into the dangers of giving bones to dogs? Order the back issue by calling 01276 858880

An approximate food consumption guide, based on raw meaty bones, for the average pet cat or dog is 15 to 20 per cent of bodyweight in a week, or 2 to 3 per cent per day. On that basis, a 25kg dog requires up to 5kg of carcasses or raw meaty bones weekly.



RAW MEATY BONES

- Chicken and turkey carcasses, after the meat has been removed for human consumption; poultry by-products, including heads, feet, necks and wings.
- Whole fish and fish heads.
- Goat, sheep, calf, deer, rat, mice and kangaroo carcasses - sawn into large pieces of meat and bone. Other by-products: pig trotters, pig heads, sheep heads, brisket, tail bones, rib bones.
- Offal: liver, lungs, trachea, hearts, omasums (stomach of ruminants), tripe.

TABLE SCRAPS

Wild carnivores eat small amounts of omnivore food, part-digested in liquid form, when they eat the intestines of their prey. Our table scraps, and some fruit and vegetable peelings, are omnivore food that has not been ingested. Providing scraps do not form too great a proportion of the diet, they appear to do no harm and may do some good (an upper limit of one-third scraps for dogs). Liquidising scraps (both cooked and raw) in the kitchen mixer may help to increase their digestibility.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Excessive meat off the bone and excessive vegetables - not balanced.
- Small pieces of bone and cooked bone - can be swallowed whole and get stuck.
- Mineral and vitamin additives - create imbalance.
- Excessive starchy food - associated with bloat.
- Onions, garlic, chocolate, grapes, raisins, sultanas, currants - toxic to pets.
- Fruit stones (pits) and corn cobs - get stuck.
- Milk - associated with diarrhoea. Milk sludge sticks to teeth and gums.

(Kindly reproduced with permission from Dr Tom Lonsdale)

For more information, consult the following books by Dr Tom Lonsdale:

- *Raw Meaty Bones: Promote Health*
 - *Work Wonders: Feed your dog raw meaty bones*
- Also see www.rawmeatybones.com

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