

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD**DISCUSSION PAPER****Microbiological risks associated with raw pet food****Issue**

1. Feeding of raw meat-based diets (RMBDs) to pets has become an increasingly popular trend amongst pet owners and has largely been driven by a movement towards consumption of more raw food by humans.
2. The perception amongst certain pet owners is that such diets may be beneficial for their companion animals. However, literature highlights there are significant concerns that such practices pose a health risk for both pets and their owners, as RMBDs may be contaminated with a wide range of pathogens including *Campylobacter* spp. *E. coli*, *Yersinia* spp., *Salmonella* spp. *Listeria* spp, *Clostridium* and also certain parasites, all of which are zoonotic, many causing enteritis and serious illness not only in humans but also in companion animals.
3. While raw pet food is not considered directly to be a food safety issue, it can nonetheless be a potential source of zoonotic infection via unhygienic or inappropriate handling in a domestic kitchen environment through cross-contamination of food. Contact with pets (including infected asymptomatic pets) infected from consuming contaminated raw pet food also serve as a potential route of exposure either via direct contact with these animals or through faecally contaminated environments.
4. In addition to the potential to cause human illness, raw pet food also may have the potential to increase animal and human exposure to AMR bacteria. The ACMSF AMR task and finish group recommended that further research is required on the prevalence of pathogens in companion animal feed and their contribution to human AMR.
5. Raw pet food was identified by the Committee as an emerging issue/risk in its recent January 2018 horizon scanning workshop. Across government this issue is also being reviewed by the human and animal infections risk surveillance group (HAIRS). The Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF) also discussed raw pet food at its meeting in February 2018.
6. An increasing number of microbiological non-compliance incidents relating to raw pet food have been notified to the FSA which are mentioned in the expanded paper. Recently, sampling of a small number of tripe samples fed

to dogs were found to be PCR positive for shiga toxin producing *E. coli* (STEC) and STEC O100:H9 Stx2 was isolated from one tripe sample.

7. The Committee may wish to be aware that the FSA is also currently working with PHE who are following up a number cases of *Salmonella* in humans which are thought to be linked to handling feeder mice (used for feeding pet reptiles).
8. The ACAF secretariat from the animal feed and by-products branch has been invited to present a short scene-setting paper which the committee can use as a basis for its deliberations.

The Committee is asked:

- To consider the information in the scene-setting paper and;
- To provide the FSA with any comments or recommendations in relation to microbiological risks to human health.

**Secretariat
May 2018**