

Book Review

Multi-Billion-Dollar Pet Food Fraud

-Tom Lonsdale

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Let me begin with a heartfelt plea: please read on!

Don't dismiss this book, nor my review, out of hand. The author, Tom Lonsdale, has been vilified by the veterinary profession for decades, and the title itself is undeniably provocative—deliberately so, I suspect. The content, too, might challenge you, suggesting as it does that the veterinary profession has been complicit, knowingly or otherwise, with pet food manufacturers. Surely, we're too intelligent for that?

Tom Lonsdale is a familiar name in the UK veterinary scene, having stood for the Royal College Council for over 30 years, persistently championing the message encapsulated in this book's title. In Australia, I imagine he may be perceived as a zealous crank by some. However, this view isn't shared by the tens of thousands of pet owners who see him as a crusading messiah. In the UK, this divide is striking. Pet owners are leading the way in advocating for biologically appropriate diets, while the profession often lags behind. Are these owners misled, victims of the 'raw-meaty brigade'? Or is there more to their enthusiasm?

But why is good nutrition controversial? Why this apparent 'us versus them' divide? Before delving into the book, I'll briefly share my own journey toward biologically appropriate feeding—an epiphany that started 30 years ago.

My Journey into Biologically Appropriate Feeding

When rabbits began gaining popularity as pets, we in the profession realized how little we truly understood about their care. As veterinary students, we'd received no training on their unique needs. Rabbits were historically raised as meat animals, not as pets expected to live long, healthy lives.

A weekend course with two rabbit specialists changed my perspective entirely. I learned that a staggering 90%

of the medical problems we saw in rabbits were diet-induced. Dental abscesses? Diet-related. Diarrhoea? Often a failure to consume caecotrophs due to dental issues—again, diet-related. Flystrike? A downstream effect of 'diarrhoea.' It was a revelation. If nutrition was this pivotal for rabbits, why wouldn't it be for other species?

This realization led me to explore rawfed.com—a light-bulb moment. I found logical, evidence-based explanations for ideas that had previously seemed implausible. For instance, we were taught that feeding bones to dogs was a recipe for disaster—risking bowel obstructions or worse. Yet, I'd seen farm dogs thrive on a diet of discarded stillborn calves. Foxhounds, too, prospered as waste-disposal units. Could the warnings we'd absorbed as students be overstated?

It was through rawfed.com that I discovered Tom Lonsdale and his seminal book, *Raw Meaty Bones*. My enlightenment continued—lagging 20 years behind Tom, but better late than never!

Reflections on Multi-Billion-Dollar Pet Food Fraud

In *Multi-Billion-Dollar Pet Food Fraud*, Tom Lonsdale shares his journey from veterinary training to challenging the pet food industry's pervasive influence. Having graduated within a decade of Tom, I found his experiences eerily familiar. Over time, we've both witnessed the pet food industry's insidious integration into the veterinary profession. Today, Mars—not just a confectionery giant but a major pet food producer—is the largest owner of veterinary practices globally.

Tom's arguments, particularly about dental disease in dogs, are compelling. He critiques veterinary dentists for their reluctance to address the root cause: inappropriate diets. Periodontitis is rampant, yet many cling to the belief that raw bones pose an unacceptable risk of tooth fractures. My own experience tells a different story—I've extracted far more teeth due to periodontal disease than I've seen fractured carnassials. My 13-year-old poodle-cross has a pristine mouth, thanks to raw meaty bones. The evidence is literally in the smile!

Strengths and Shortcomings

Tom's writing is powerful, but it's not without flaws. His language is often intemperate, and his tone may alienate some readers. After decades of whistleblowing with little acknowledgment, frustration is understandable—but it doesn't always make for easy reading. Additionally, while the book is meticulously researched, a handful of statements haven't aged well in light of new evidence. These, however, are exceptions that don't detract from the book's core message.

Tom invites readers to confront uncomfortable truths: that our profession receives scant nutritional training and is vulnerable to influence from pet food manufacturers. While it's easy to dismiss such claims, consider this: corporations wouldn't spend billions on advertising and sponsorship if these strategies weren't effective. Are we really immune to the subtle (or not-so-subtle) effects of selective information?

Why You Should Read This Book

Tom's book is more than a critique; it's a call to arms. It's well-referenced, including shocking correspondence that illustrates the profession's resistance to change. The connections he draws between the pet food industry's tactics and the human food industry are particularly illuminating. For a broader context, I recommend pairing this book with Chris van Tulleken's *Ultra-Processed People: Why Do We Eat Stuff That Isn't Food—And Can't Stop?*

Multi-Billion-Dollar Pet Food Fraud is not a comfortable read, but it's an essential one. It challenges us to question entrenched beliefs, confront biases, and prioritise the health of our patients over convenience or convention. Let it change the way you think about pet food—and maybe even your own diet. ♦



Figure 1. Typical 12-year-old kibble-fed terrier

Figure 2. Author's 14-year-old terrier Ronnie's teeth

Figure 3. Ronnie



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For dogs' sake, read
Dr Tom Lonsdale's books.

—The London Economic