

Escaping the Raw-Feeding Maze

How formulas, influencers and product dependency obscure natural feeding and cybernetic health

Main message

Stopping ultra-processed industrial pet food may bring rapid and dramatic improvement. That improvement does not prove that every ratio, supplement, recipe or ritual in the replacement regime caused the benefit. Pet owners need to separate the effect of stopping the old insult from the effects of anything newly added. Then they can return to the essentials: start with the mouth, feed for function and watch the feedback.

At a glance

Trap	A better cybernetic question
"My pet improved, so the whole new recipe must work."	What changed because the old food stopped, and what extra benefit was actually shown for the new additions?
"Raw" means natural.	Does the food require ripping, tearing, gnawing and chewing, and does it maintain the mouth?
A precise ratio must be scientific.	Does the advice respond to the species, the individual animal, the mouth, behaviour and feedback over time?
More ingredients mean better nutrition.	What biological function does each addition perform, and is it necessary?
A famous expert must know.	Are the claims testable, supported, qualified and open to correction?
A diet can replace dentistry.	Is pain, infection, retained teeth, abnormal bite or established periodontal disease being recognised and treated?

1. Why this paper exists

Many pet owners discover a simple and liberating truth: when ultra-processed industrial pet food is stopped, the dog or cat may improve quickly. Breath, coat, skin, stools, appetite, behaviour, vitality and general comfort may all change. The owner sees the animal come alive and naturally asks, "What produced this improvement?"

Unfortunately, that moment of discovery has become a commercial opportunity. Authors, influencers, podcasters, conference speakers, course providers and product sellers may attach the improvement to their own distinctive formula. A particular percentage, vegetable mix, powder, oil, probiotic, supplement stack or branded protocol is presented as the key.

The owner may have escaped the industrial pet-food system, but not the industrial way of thinking. One manufactured formula has simply been exchanged for another. The pet-owner community becomes marooned halfway between junk feeding and a genuinely natural, functional and cybernetic understanding.

This paper is intended as an intellectual decontamination chamber. It helps owners recognise what must be unlearned before the larger cybernetic picture can become clear.

2. The first great improvement: stop the insult

When several things are changed at once, the resulting improvement cannot automatically be credited to the whole replacement programme. Consider what may happen during a typical change of diet:

- The former ultra-processed food is withdrawn.
- Fresh animal tissues replace cooked, powdered, extruded or chemically engineered material.
- Carbohydrate load, additives, flavours, preservatives or oxidised fats may be reduced.
- Feeding frequency, treats, body weight, exercise and owner attention may change.
- Some natural food structure may be restored.

- New supplements, vegetables, ratios, recipes or commercial products may also be introduced.

If the animal improves, all these changes are bundled together. The improvement shows that the old and new systems differ. It does not show which element did what.

The essential distinction

Withdrawal effect: benefit from stopping something harmful or dysfunctional. Addition effect: any further benefit - or harm - produced by what is newly introduced. The two must not be confused.

No honest percentage can yet be assigned to the withdrawal effect in every animal. It may account for half, four-fifths or more of the early improvement. The exact number is not the point. The point is that the effect must be separated before a promoter can validly claim that a special formula created the result.

3. The withdrawal-attribution fallacy

The common pattern is simple:

1 Old industrial food	2 Diet is changed	3 Animal improves	4 Whole result credited to the new formula	5 Owner buys more advice and products
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The withdrawal-attribution fallacy: improvement after a change is used to validate every feature of the replacement system.

The fallacy is persuasive because the improvement may be real. The error lies not in noticing the improvement, but in claiming more than the observation proves. A dog that becomes brighter after kibble is stopped has not thereby proved the value of turmeric, kelp, berries, a fixed bone percentage or a subscription supplement pack.

Some promoters may be sincere. Some may be commercially self-deceived. Some may exaggerate what they know. Pet owners do not need to decide motives in order to protect their animals. They can examine the structure of the claim.

4. Raw is not enough

The word raw now covers many very different systems: mince, patties, tubs, sausages, frozen nuggets, BARF, PMR, ratio diets, recipe services, boutique products, supplements and disease-specific programmes. Some may remove important features of industrial food. But rawness alone does not restore carnivore function.

A soft raw mixture can be swallowed with little chewing. It may leave teeth and gums largely untouched. A product can be uncooked yet still be highly processed, finely minced, packaged, standardised and sold through the same dependency model as kibble.

Key principle

Do not ask only, "Is it raw?" Ask, "What work must the animal perform to obtain and eat it, what happens in the mouth, and what feedback follows through the whole animal over time?"

For carnivores, food form matters. Ripping, tearing, gnawing and chewing help clean teeth, massage gums, stimulate saliva, exercise jaws and neck muscles, condition behaviour and influence the mouth-body feedback system. A nutrient list cannot substitute for those functions.

5. When the kibble mentality survives

Commercial raw feeding often sounds rebellious while preserving the central assumptions of industrial feeding. The bowl remains the centre of attention. Experts still formulate it. Owners still fear deficiency. Health is still presented as the output of a precisely engineered mixture. When problems arise, another product or protocol is added.

Industrial pet-food thinking	Commercial raw formula thinking
The bowl must be made complete by experts.	The raw bowl must be made complete by experts.
Health resides in nutrient specifications.	Health resides in ratios, recipes and additions.
Food structure is secondary.	Mince and patties are treated as equivalent to functional food.

Owners depend on manufacturers.	Owners depend on influencers, courses and subscriptions.
A problem calls for another specialised product.	A problem calls for another supplement or protocol.
Authority comes from branding and credentials.	Authority comes from celebrity, followers and certification.

The ingredients differ, but the relationship between expert, product, owner and animal may remain unchanged. The pet escapes one marketplace and enters another.

6. The raw-feeding maze

The maze is built from several recurring traps. Any one of them can distract owners from the animal in front of them.

The ratio trap. A fixed percentage creates an impression of precision. But living animals differ in age, anatomy, activity, condition, appetite, dental health and response. A ratio can be a rough guide; it is not a substitute for observation.

The recipe trap. The longer the ingredient list, the more scientific the regime may appear. Yet complexity can conceal the fact that the food is soft, the mouth is diseased and the animal is not functioning as a carnivore.

The supplement trap. Powders, oils, herbs, probiotics and superfoods can become commercial insurance against owner anxiety. Each addition should have a clear purpose, evidence, dose, risk assessment and stopping rule.

The protocol trap. A named disease is matched with a branded feeding programme. This repeats the treatment paradigm: one label, one intervention. Cybernetic thinking instead examines the interacting mouth, diet, microbes, organs, behaviour, environment and time.

The celebrity trap. Confidence, popularity, testimonials, podcasts and conference stages can mimic authority. None of them separates withdrawal effects from formula effects.

The certification trap. Paid courses may certify loyalty to a system rather than demonstrated competence in carnivore mouths, periodontal disease, safe feeding and biological feedback.

The perfection trap. Owners are persuaded that one mistake will unbalance the diet. Fear drives weighing, calculating, shopping and dependence. The animal becomes less observed while the bowl becomes more elaborate.

7. What the maze can do to pets and owners

The harm is not limited to wasted money. An incomplete paradigm directs attention to the wrong level of the system.

- The mouth is sidelined. Owners debate ingredients while bad breath, inflamed gums, retained baby teeth, abnormal bites, loose teeth and pain continue.
- Established disease is mistaken for a diet problem alone. Raw food is expected to repair a mouth that first needs competent dental treatment.
- Soft raw products are mistaken for functional feeding. The pet receives fresh ingredients but little tooth cleaning, gum massage or jaw exercise.
- Unnecessary complexity creates anxiety. Owners fear ordinary variation and lose confidence in their own observation and judgement.
- Costs multiply. Books, courses, consultations, conferences, subscriptions and supplements consume money that may be needed for proper dental care and appropriate food.
- Adverse feedback is ignored. When the promised system fails, the owner may be told to add more products rather than question the model.
- The wider movement is marooned. Debate remains trapped in nutrient arithmetic, while the mouth, microbiome, immune system, behaviour, ecology and time remain outside the frame.
- A better cybernetic research programme is delayed. Formula promotion substitutes testimonials and branding for the comparisons that could reveal what is really happening.

8. An intellectual decontamination chamber

Escaping the maze requires more than changing products. Several habits of thought must be removed and replaced.

Unlearn	Replace with
The bowl is the animal.	The animal is a living, changing system.

A label or ratio guarantees health.	Function and feedback reveal whether the system is working.
Raw mince equals natural feeding.	Food structure and the work of eating matter.
More additions mean more protection.	Use simplicity; add only for a clear, justified reason.
Improvement proves the whole formula.	Separate withdrawal effects from addition effects.
A guru provides certainty.	Claims must remain testable, limited and open to correction.
Diet replaces dentistry.	Restore the diseased mouth, then maintain function for life.
One plan fits every animal.	Observe species, age, size, anatomy, history and response over time.

This is not a call to replace one rigid doctrine with another. It is a call to restore proportion, function, observation and correction. Cybernetics begins when the living animal, rather than the formula, becomes the source of feedback.

9. How to test a feeding adviser

Before paying for a book, course, conference, consultation, subscription or supplement programme, ask the following questions:

1. Does the adviser begin with the mouth - teeth, gums, pain, periodontal disease, retained baby teeth, bite and chewing ability?
2. Do they explain what physical and biological work the food performs, rather than discussing ingredients alone?
3. Do they distinguish the benefit of stopping the former food from the claimed benefit of their special additions?
4. Has the promoted formula itself been compared with a simpler raw meaty bones or carcass-based approach?
5. Are limitations, risks, uncertainty and commercial interests clearly disclosed?
6. Does the system reduce dependence over time, or continually generate new products, tests, courses and anxieties?
7. What observations would cause the adviser to change or abandon the recommendation?
8. Is there a responsible plan for animals with diseased, painful or malformed mouths?

A useful rule

A feeding adviser who cannot account for the mouth is not giving complete carnivore-health advice. An adviser who cannot say what evidence would change their mind is not using feedback.

10. The responsible path back to function

Owners do not need another elaborate doctrine. They need a safe sequence that returns attention to the animal.

1. Observe safely. Smell the breath and watch eating, chewing, comfort, food dropping, one-sided use, drooling, face rubbing and behaviour. Do not force open a painful or frightened mouth.
2. Seek competent dental assessment where warning signs, abnormal development or doubt exist. Puppies, kittens, flat-faced breeds and older animals deserve particular attention.
3. Deal with pain, infection and structural problems. Raw meaty bones are not a substitute for dentistry where dentistry is needed.
4. Stop feeding ultra-processed or dysfunctional foods. Recognise that this withdrawal may itself produce much of the early improvement.
5. Introduce suitable raw meaty bones or carcass-based foods according to species, size, age, health, anatomy and previous experience. Never feed cooked bones.
6. Keep the system as simple as the animal allows. Do not add ingredients merely because an influencer has created anxiety about their absence.
7. Watch the feedback. Follow breath, gums, teeth, chewing, stools, coat, skin, odour, appetite, body condition, energy, behaviour and comfort over time.
8. Correct course. When feedback is poor, reassess the mouth, the food, the animal, the environment and the assumptions behind the advice.

11. Important safeguards

Natural feeding is not licence for carelessness. Dogs and cats differ greatly. A food item suitable for one animal may be unsuitable for another because of size, swallowing style, dental disease, anatomy, prior experience or illness.

- Do not force an animal to chew through pain.
- Do not use cooked bones.
- Use pieces appropriate to the animal and supervise where necessary.
- Avoid very small items that may be swallowed whole by a large or greedy dog.
- Seek veterinary advice for serious illness, repeated vomiting, obstruction concerns, severe diarrhoea, marked weight loss, choking, oral swelling or obvious pain.
- Remember that a pet continuing to eat does not prove that the mouth is comfortable or healthy.

The principle is restoration and maintenance: restore a diseased mouth where necessary, then maintain a healthy, functional mouth through appropriate food and continuing observation.

12. The larger cybernetic destination

This paper concerns raw-feeding confusion, but the issue is larger than food. Industrial feeding and commercial raw formula systems share a linear habit: put the correct product in, expect health to come out, and purchase another intervention when the result disappoints.

Cybernetic thinking asks a different set of questions. How do food form, mouth use, microbes, gums, saliva, immune signalling, organs, behaviour, environment and time regulate one another? Where has a corrective loop been broken? Where has an amplifying loop developed? What feedback shows improvement or deterioration?

The aim is not to make pet owners dependent on a new authority. It is to help them become better observers, better questioners and better guardians of the animal in front of them.

The way out of the maze

Do not exchange kibble dogma for raw-feeding dogma. Start with the mouth. Feed for function. Watch the feedback. Keep claims testable. Let the living animal, not the celebrity formula, guide correction.

Read next

For pet owners and readers wishing to explore the wider framework:

- [Cybernetic Hypothesis of Periodontal Disease in Mammalian Carnivores](#)
- [Pet Owner Beginner's Guide to Cybernetics](#)
- [Raw Meaty Bones: Promote Health](#)
- [Why Not BARF?](#)
- [Raw Meaty Bones Promote Health case report, December 1992](#)
- [Three Part Test, December 2006](#)
- [Original cybernetic paper](#)
- [Periodontal Medicine and the Limitations of Linear Causality: Time for a Cybernetic Framework](#)

Educational discussion only. It does not replace examination, diagnosis or treatment by a suitably competent veterinary professional.