

# Many reasons to explain longevity of UK's pets

Dear editor,

Come off it, Mr Atkinson (August 11 issue). Has your scientific training evaporated with your 33 years in practice? There are many reasons that might explain the improved longevity of pets, not least of which is the ministrations of our profession. Dogs and cats are carnivores, meaning they eat meat. My own dogs – shock, horror – eat meat most days. In my opinion, the pet food manufacturers are cute enough at beguiling the public. They do not need your help.

Yours faithfully,

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# Diets: many clients 'are one step ahead of vets'

Dear editor,

In reply to Martin Atkinson's letter "Where were all the other pet food letters?" (August 11 issue), I question his comment that dogs and cats are living 30 per cent longer than when he qualified 33 years ago. I also question his belief that as feeding processed food is the norm, ergo processed food must be responsible. If, indeed, dogs and cats are living longer, it has precious little to do with the diet the majority are being fed (processed), but is much more likely to be because of improved diagnostics and better medical and surgical prowess. It is almost unbelievable that anyone can logically think that a diet of processed food is responsible for better health and increased longevity. How fortunate for us that human health-care professionals don't share the same beliefs.

Mr Atkinson is, perhaps, the one who should "get real". If some owners are feeding a raw diet inappropriately, it is because they are not getting the proper advice and support from their veterinary surgeons – the same veterinary surgeons who, in all probability, have a waiting room stocked with processed food for sale.

Contrary to Mr Atkinson's dire predictions, I can assure him the tens of thousands of pet owners who have safely, and confidently, fed a raw meaty bones diet to their pets for many years can attest to the fact that their dogs and cats are not suffering bouts of food poisoning or malnutrition. Nor are they dropping like flies. In fact, they are in better health than they ever were on a processed diet.

More and more pet owners are switching to raw meaty diets, and I would respectfully suggest Mr Atkinson, and any like-minded colleagues, re-educate themselves on what a correct food for domestic carnivores is. An excellent place to start would be Tom Lonsdale's book *Raw Meaty Bones*. Many of their clients will be one step ahead, as they have already read it.

Yours faithfully,

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# **Rabbit mantra always helps me on pet diets**

Dear editor,

It all started with fat bunnies with bad teeth, coarse bunny mix and selective feeding. We pellet the food to avoid selection and reduce hypocalcaemia, and then find the food is short on fibre.

September 22, 2008

We add more fibre, and finally the penny drops – rabbits eat grass, so feed them grass. Amazing really.

I would advise remembering this mantra: rabbits eat grass – and most other animals eat rabbits, including cats.

A new client came into the surgery the other day with one of her pet dinosaurs, called Dino. He was obese and was suffering from a pathological fracture of the humerus. Unfamiliar with dinosaur biology, I immediately looked to Google (as is my way these days). Three minutes later, I discovered the woman's pet was a carnivorous species that naturally ate fish and seals. I asked about Dino's diet: the best adult dinosaur food from DinosaursRus came the answer. She told me dinosaurs coped okay on this, and the food was cheap, convenient, and scientifically formulated, featuring – as it did – lots of research into the different variations of the food.

I looked at the label on the sack: pre-historic wheat, spelt, maize, barley, cellulose, dehydrated incinerated pleisiosaur meal (23 per cent), soya, maize gluten, coal, and E numbers one through 307 inclusive. With an apologetic tone, I pointed out that the food was totally inappropriate for a carnivorous dinosaur. I explained that a fit, healthy adult might just about cope with the food, but that the diet was far from ideal – and certainly not nutritious enough for babies. "Carnivorous dinos need meat," I explained.

"But it's 21 per cent protein. It says so on the pack," she replied.

Twenty-one per cent protein, perhaps, but of what biological value? And why does it not mention on the pack that the diet is actually 50 per cent starch-based? Funny that.

I reiterated that carnivorous dinosaurs were simply not designed to eat grain, and that in the wild, Dino would be eating a diet containing 85 per cent protein.

"But it's scientifically formulated," she replied.

"But it's scientifically formulated," she replied.

Exasperated, I let forth with a little outburst. "Can't you see, you're feeding Dino with totally inappropriate food. He is a carnivore. He should eat meat, not carbohydrate. Meat, I say, meat. As a convenient second best, he should have a dried meat or fish-based diet, matching as closely as possible the food he would eat in the wild."

I continued my rant and explained that if her dinosaurs were fed the right diet in the first place, they would not need all the other dietary variations for various life stages. The babies could eat the same food as mum, and the less active ones would not get fat. Urinary calculi would disappear, and heart attacks would be a thing of the past. Ever seen an obese sabre-tooth tiger, I ask? Remembering the mantra "bunnies eat grass, and everything else eats bunnies", I calmed myself down before seeing the next client: a woman with two cats – one plantigrade, one obese with dental resorptive lesions.

"But I'm feeding them on the Atkinson feline diet, which never causes health problems," she proudly related.

Did someone mention a dinosaur?

Yours faithfully,

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