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MISSION STATEMENT

to lovingly provide
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501(C)(3)
TAX ID # 76-078197

IMPORTANT ALERT FOR ALL PAWS' TEAMS
~ concerning the use of raw protein diets for therapy companions ~

There have recently been several important medical studies published that focus on the use of a raw diet for our pets and the potential harmful consequences for the people we visit. We have consulted with experts in the medical field both inside and outside of PAWS to make sure that we are thoroughly informed and can make a policy decision that is in the best interest of the people we visit and PAWS, itself.

We find ourselves in a tough place. Reviewing the data, there is no choice but to take a firm stand on the visitation of our therapy companions who eat a raw diet. We are aware that several of our teams use a raw diet for their pets and we know the policy PAWS presents here will be upsetting to some. I am upset, as well, to have to deliver this message to you. But the data are irrefutable and dictate the course we must follow.

If you need more detailed information than is supplied in this letter or would like to talk with someone about these issues, please feel free to call the office.

Below please find

- 1) our policy restricting visitation of PAWS therapy pets that are fed a raw diet
- 2) an attachment that we now require you to sign and file with us.

PAWS' Policy Regarding Therapy Companions and a Raw Protein Diet

- 1 – PAWS' main objective is to provide people with the best visit possible
- 2 – PAWS teams should in no way cause harm or endanger the people we visit
- 3 – the use of a raw protein diet for pets creates the potential transmission of Salmonella, E. Coli, and Toxoplasmosis (studies supporting this are available upon request)
- 4 – the people PAWS' teams visit are those most susceptible to these infections – the elderly, those who are immunocompromised, and the very young
- 5 – while PAWS is NOT telling any team that they should not feed their pets a raw diet, PAWS IS saying that if you DO choose to give your therapy companion the raw diet, that pet may no longer visit people under the auspices of PAWS
- 6 – as of this date, all PAWS teams are required to read, sign, and return the attached statement certifying that you will protect the folks you visit by not exposing them to a pet that has eaten raw food within the past 28 days

You may file this statement online or send via snail mail.
Deadline for compliance: 8/30/10.

Please see back for important additional information on this topic.

Attached is the Guideline Agreement & Indemnification

We require you to sign this and return to our office.

Below please find

- A) a list of members of our Medical Advisory Team
- B) a statement from our Chief Medical Advisor
- C) a list of studies and materials available to you if you wish further information on this topic

A) PAWS Medical Advisory Team

Dr. Mart Amick, Internal Medicine Associates, PAWS Chief Medical Advisor; Ryan McKenzie, DVM, Banfield Veterinary Hospital, Brandywine; Michelle Adams, Director of Risk Management, Union Hospital; Kim Mitchell, Chief, Rabies and Vector-borne Diseases Center for Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases Infectious Disease and Environmental Health Administration, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Denise A. Elliott, Medical Specialist, Nutrition, BVSc PhD Dipl ACVIM Dipl ACVN.

B) Statement from our Chief Medical Advisor

To: Lynne Robinson, Executive Director Paws For People
From: Mart J. Amick, M.D., Medical Advisory Board Member
Re: Visitation and Raw Meat Diet

It has come to my attention that some of the PAWS for People pet owners are feeding their pets the BARF or RAW food diet. Although this may (or may not) be a healthier diet for the pet, several studies have demonstrated the potential for transmission of Salmonella, E.Coli and Toxoplasmosis. The persons most susceptible to these infections are indeed the population who is being visited by PAWS, the elderly, immunocompromised and the very young. It is my medical opinion that no further visitation be allowed by any pet who has consumed a raw diet (even one meal) within the two weeks prior to the visitation. To this end it would seem prudent to have the pet owner attest to this via a written statement which can be drafted by our legal representation.

Although this may be unpopular with some PAWS members, the tenant of “first, do no harm” must outweigh the preferences of the pet owners. The data are very clear and any transmission or even the risk of transmission in my estimation would be indefensible. Attached are the abstracts of articles on which I based my opinion. Please feel free to contact me about this matter.

Yours truly, Mart J. Amick, M.D.

C) List of policy statements/studies/abstracts available from the office

- Delta Society Pet Partners Program: Raw Protein Diet Policy
- Policy statement from Union Hospital, Director of Quality and Risk Management
- JAVMA, Vol. 233, No. 3, August 1, 2008
- Guidelines for animal-assisted interventions in health care facilities – State of Maryland Dept. of Health
- Risk of salmonellae shedding by dogs fed Salmonella-contaminated raw food diets. Vet J 2007;48:69
- Preliminary assessment of the risk of Salmonella infection in dogs fed raw chicken diets
- Abstracts - U.S. National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health



PAWS' RAW FOOD DIET GUIDELINE AGREEMENT & INDEMNIFICATION

In the wake of the widespread pet food recalls several years ago, many owners decided to feed their pets a raw food diet. While such diets can pose many problems for your pets, your veterinarian can give the best nutritional advice for your pet. However, please be advised that the American Animal Hospital Association reports that many veterinary hospitals place pets that are on a raw food diet in an isolation ward to eliminate risks to other animal patients.

Raw food diets are incompatible with PAWS' mission because raw foods introduce disease-causing bacteria and parasites, including E. Coli and Salmonella, into your pet's digestive system, which your pet can, in turn, introduce to our visitees - many of whom are young or are infirm and who have compromised immune systems.

In order to maintain your team status, all PAWS volunteers are required to certify that their pets have not been consuming raw foods as follows:

I, _____, the intending to be legally bound, hereby, for myself, my family, my heirs, executors, & administrators, hereby certify that for the preceding 28 days, my pet _____ has not consumed raw foods. I forever waive, release, discharge and indemnify and hold harmless PAWS for People (a/k/a Pet Assisted Visitation Volunteer Services, Inc.) and any facility to which I bring my pet, from any and all direct and indirect liability arising from illness, personal injury, damage, costs and attorneys' fees which any person or animal suffers as a direct or indirect result of any misrepresentation made hereunder.

Signature

Date

Parent or Guardian (if under 18)

Date



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Clarification of PAWS Policy on Raw Food Diets for Therapy Companions

1 – Pets eating raw diet are prohibited from visiting through PAWS as of our compliance date – August 30, 2010.

The Guideline Agreement and Indemnification needs to be signed and returned to the office by the above compliance date.

2 – Human volunteers should follow good hygienic practices like hand washing and use of sanitizers as needed during visits. Human volunteers who feed their pets a raw diet are welcome and encouraged to participate in PAWS activities and events.

All team members whether they feed their dogs raw or commercial canned/dry food should wash their hands between each visitation and when they handle treats during the visit.

3 – The liability of allowing raw diet fed pets including those known to be fed high quality raw food remains too high to justify the risk of exposing an at-risk population.

4 – This policy and clarification thereof are now officially part of the PAWS Membership Agreement that all teams sign and agree to follow during their membership with PAWS for People. Those having signed agreements with PAWS before this policy was adopted are hereby bound by the guidelines and restrictions outlined in the policy and its clarification.

PAWS' policies are developed to protect and serve the people and institutions we visit, as well as PAWS teams. To protect our teams and those we visit, PAWS continues its practice to withdraw support and all insurance coverage from teams that do not follow our policies.

Lynne Robinson
Executive Director

August 16, 2010