Canadian Raw Pet Food Project

Canadian Raw Food Manufacturers' Voluntary Questionnaire

Thank you so much for helping us spread the word about your company's products, formulations, and manufacturing. These questions come from Canadian pet parents and veterinarians wishing to learn more about Canada's growing raw pet food industry and are voluntary, so feel free to provide as little or as much information as you wish. Our goal is to provide people with as much information about Canada's raw pet food suppliers as possible.

Date: 12/30/20

Company Name: Big Country Raw Ltd.

Brand(s): Big Country Raw, Hungry Hunter, Thrive, Trek, Cookhouse

Name of Authorized Representative: Geraldine Brouwer - Owner/Vice-President

Website: www.bigcountryraw.ca

Public Email: info@bigcountryraw.ca

Public Phone: 905-957-2717

Some companies have offered to help fund testing. Would you like to contribute to your brand's analysis? (We'll let people know you proactively participated when we post the results!).

- [x] Yes, our company would like to contribute money to the cost of basic nutrient testing in the amount of $500.00 CAD.
- [ ] No, our company does not want to contribute financially to our analysis.

Canadian Raw Pet Food Project

Some companies would like to complete additional lab testing (beyond basic nutrient analysis) to share with the public. If you opt to add on tests, we will disclose you paid for these additional tests to provide additional transparency when we post results.

If interested in additional testing, please indicate below and we will contact you to discuss options and pricing.

- [x] Yes, we'd like to discuss additional testing.
- [ ] No, we're not interested in additional testing.

What are your company's goals or objectives for the foods you produce? (please strive for less than 500 words)

To contribute to the pet food industry by benefiting Canadian pet parents with fresh raw foods for their pets. We strive to ensure our products are made with the highest quality ingredients and are both affordable and accessible to Canadian pet families. We strive to provide variety in protein selection, recipes and ingredients to ensure pet families have options that best fit the needs of their companions. We are focused on the health and safety of the pets in ensuring we follow safe food handling but also testing of our facility, ingredients and equipment.

How long has your company been in operation? 2012

What is your company's mission statement?

Canadian Raw Pet Food Project

Is your product sold:

- [x] in pet stores
- [x] by delivery route
- [x] online
- [ ] other: _____

Do you also produce or sell supplemental products?

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

If you produce or sell supplements, are they:

- [x] Required: must be added to balance the diets you produce.
- [ ] Optional: suggested but will not create nutritional deficiencies if not used.

Do you make any reference or imply on your website or packaging that your products are complete and balanced, or that they are all a pet needs nutritionally?

- [ ] Yes, on all raw pet food products.
- [x] Yes, on some raw pet food products.
- [ ] No.

Do you have disclaimers or guidance on your packaging for feeding your product to puppies?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] We have separate foods for growing puppies.
- [ ] No, we do not recommend our food for growing puppies.

Canadian Raw Pet Food Project

Do you have disclaimers or guidance on your packaging for feeding your product to cats?

- [ ] Yes
- [x] We have separate foods for cats.
- [ ] No, we do not recommend our food for cats.

If your product information mentions or implies it is nutritionally complete and balanced, to what official standard have they been formulated?

- [x] NRC 2006
- [ ] AAFCO 2020
- [ ] FEDIAF 2020

Have your products been formulated by a formulation service or a nutritionist?

- [ ] No
- [x] Yes. Name: Julie Lauzon Agr.M. Sc
- [ ] Yes. We prefer to keep the name confidential.

If your products were formulated by a nutritionist, were they:

- [x] Formulated on a caloric basis.
- [ ] Formulated on a dry matter basis.
- [ ] Formulated to Atwater.
- [ ] Formulated to modified Atwater.

Canadian Raw Pet Food Project

If you have performed micronutrient nutrition analyses (beyond a Guaranteed Analysis, such as iodine, vitamins D and E), do you disclose results to the public?

- [ ] We have not tested our products.
- [ ] We do not disclose results.
- [x] Yes we have tested our products.
- [x] We willingly disclose results via email.
- [x] We post results on our website.

How have you verified the nutritional adequacy of your foods?

- [x] Spreadsheet nutritional analysis using USDA/NRC data, pre-production.
- [ ] Feeding trial.
- [x] Lab submission of final product.

Do you produce prey-model grinds, “80/10/10” (meat/bone/organ) blends, or whole prey blends?

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

If you produce prey-model grinds, “80/10/10” (meat/bone/organ) blends or whole prey blends, how do you quantify the nutrients in your products?

- [ ] We have not analyzed the nutrients in our grinds or blends.
- [x] Spreadsheet nutritional analysis using USDA/NRC data, pre-production.
- [x] Lab submission of final product.

Canadian Raw Pet Food Project

If you produce prey-model grinds, “80/10/10” (meat/bone/organ) blends or whole prey blends, do you disclose nutritional analyses (beyond a Guaranteed Analysis, such as iodine, vitamins D and E) of the products?

- [ ] No, we have not tested our products or don’t disclose the results.
- [ ] Yes, via email.
- [x] Yes, they are posted on our website.

If you produce prey-model grinds, “80/10/10” (meat/bone/organ) blends or whole prey blends, how do you indicate these foods are not nutritionally complete, require supplementation, or are for intermittent feeding only?

- [x] All packaging states “for intermittent or supplemental feeding only.”
- [x] Our website states which products are not nutritionally complete.

For products not marketed as balanced, do you provide further instruction for the additions required to make the diet nutritionally complete and balanced?

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

For products not marketed as balanced, do you provide a complete micronutrient nutritional analysis so pet parents are capable of knowing what may need to be added to your foods?

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

If you produce grinds, blends or recipes that are meant to be **fed in rotation** to meet minimum nutritional adequacy, have you submitted the complete rotational program for nutritional analysis?

- [ ] Yes
- [x] No

Canadian Raw Pet Food Project

If you produce grinds, blends or recipes that are meant to be **fed in rotation** to meet minimum nutritional adequacy, do you disclose the nutritional analysis of each "stand alone" recipe (in case people choose not to rotate)?

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

Does your company perform any ongoing or recurrent testing, as a quality control measure?

- [x] Yes, for nutritional adequacy via sample submission to a lab.

  How often? dependent on a supplier change, update to packaging et.

- [x] Yes, for pathogens.

  Method (lab submission, in-house, etc.): Lab Submission + In-house

  How often? in-house - daily - lab submission as part of our HACCP Protocols

- [ ] Other:_____
- [ ] No

Does your customer support include detailed/individualized consultation or advice?

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

Please share a brief overview about how you approach quality control:

Our plant follows HACCP principles. Note: We are not yet HACCP 3rd party certified as we are awaiting the implementation of our ERP solution which will allow us to achieve the final critical "piece" of our HACCP plan which is full traceability to the end consumer. As we deliver to over 10,000 customers this requirement could only be achieved with a solution that could document and store this information. Our ERP solution implementation is to be completed in Q1 2021 and final HACCP audit is scheduled immediately thereafter. We hope to provide our customers and retailers with our HACCP accreditation by Q2.

In the current absence of a HACCP certificate, we do however document our entire food process, bill of materials, recipes, nutrient and pathogen testing. Our Food Safety Plan is available for review upon request.

Canadian Raw Pet Food Project

Are you in the midst of any formulation changes, or do you have future plans for product improvements? (500 words or less)

We are always interested in continuous improvements.

However, we recently released our NRC recipes in January 2020. We do not have immediate plans to make a recipe change but can not say with absolute certainty that we won't consider some formulation changes.

Do you have plans to do additional nutrient testing to determine the nutritional profiles of your products?

We already do this. In addition to guaranteed analysis (including full mineral and vitamin analysis) we also test our recipes for amino acids and fatty acids. This information is available for your consideration as well upon request.

What is the sourcing for your food ingredients?

We source from CFIA inspected suppliers. A full list of our suppliers and their CFIA numbers is available upon request.

What is the sourcing on any vitamin/mineral supplements you may be using?

We source from accredited suppliers that supply the pharma, agri and food industries. A list of our suppliers is available upon request.

Canadian Raw
Pet Food Project

If you use any human grade ingredients, how do you substantiate the 'human grade' claim? (How do you prove to your customers you're really using human grade meats, veggies, etc.?)

We source from only CFIA accredited suppliers. We regularly share on social media some of the companies that we have worked closely with. Additionally, we have and do provide a list of our suppliers and their CFIA numbers upon request.

If you use any organic ingredients, how do you substantiate this claim?

We do. We only use this claim when the supplier can provide us with their agriculture certification label.

Does your company have any third-party validation, verification, or quality control measures you would like to share?

Would you like to include any pictures, graphs or charts about your company?

(Please list and attach.)

What are the Top 3 things you want consumers to know about your products?

1. Why NRC and not AAFCO for our raw diets? Since we opened our doors in 2012 we always felt that pet parents deserved to know more about what was in their pet food and how it was prepared. Our first recipes were simplistic, following standard BARF or Prey-Model raw recipes of 80/10/10. As depend grew for a more "complete" raw diet we decided that simply following AAFCO by adding a vitamin mineral pre-mix to our recipes was not what pet parents were looking for. We decided to instead educate our consumers on the NRC Nutrient Standards and formulated recipes to meet the NRC Nutrient Requirements. We choose not to follow AAFCO as we felt that the AAFCO guidelines were created by kibble for kibble and didn't address the bio-availability of fresh raw ingredients. We also were unable to meet the AAFCO standards without a synthetic vitamin mineral pre-mix. We make 2 recipes 1 for dogs (Dinner recipes) and 1 for cats (Fare Game) that meets the NRC Nutrient Requirements. We used Barley Grass, Wheat Grass and kelp to help fill in the "missing essential nutrients" that can not be found in just meat, bone, organ meat and and our fruit and vegetable blend. We publish our nutrient analysis on our website and even provide charts for our customers to see how our nutrient analysis meets or exceeds the NRC Nutrient Requirement. We have always recommended supplementation with an Omega3 Fatty Acid. This has always appeared on our packaging and we offer many solutions to our customers including 3 types of Omega 3 Oils (Herring - #1 choice, Salmon, and Hemp (plant based alternative). We also offer whole fish options including; sardines, salmon (Ground, or whole fillets) and whole herring.

2. We believe in customer education. Choosing to feed raw does not need to be difficult, but we know there are a lot of mis-information available to pet parents about raw diets.
   We provide our customers with a custom meal plan upon request to ensure that they are making the best possible choices for their pets needs.
   We have 4 different meal choices as well. Dinner formulas are our best sellers and our most recommended for pet owners. Pure Formulas & Blends are not complete meals but can be a great option for DIY, or pet parents dealing with food intolerance or allergies. We formulated and produced a supplement - Thrive Fortify + an added source of Omega3 Fatty Acids (e.g. Herring Oil) can be added to these recipes to make them NRC complete. Our Fare Game is a complete meal for cats but also requires additional supplementation with an Omega 3 Fatty acid.

What are the Top 3 things you want consumers to know about your products? (cont.)

3. We are family owned! Our business has grown alot! We've received several awards from Air Miles, The Globe and Mail and Canadian Business as one of Canada's Fastest Growing Companies. These are achievements we never could have thought possible in just 8 years time. We are however, not owned by a private equity group or a large corporation. Big Country Raw is owned and operated by Rob & Geraldine Brouwer. The Big Country Raw team is over 150 strong now and we continue to grow! We opened a brand new facility in 2019 in Smithville and in 1 year we already started an expansion to our plant. We also opened a distribution centre in Ottawa and Calgary in 2020. We are very proud of what we have accomplished but our continued growth is only possible with the support of the pet community. The product innovations we have brought to market (e.g. paperboard packaging, NRC recipes, Raw Goat Milk, Quail Eggs, Thrive Supplements etc) are all a result of us listening to the raw community. We are committed to continuing to listen and grow.

Do you have any additional comments or feedback that you'd like to provide us.

We opened our doors in 2012 and in just 8 short years we are Canada's national raw brand, but there is still work to do! The support of the veterinarian community is essential to the continued growth of this category and we hope that this research project can help achieve that objective.

We also would like to note that although Canada may lack FDA or USDA oversight in the formulation of pet foods they are however subject to other regulations such as the Consumer Packaging And Labelling Act, and Competition Act. These perhaps are not focused on nutrient standards but they do protect Canadian families and ensure accuracy on pet food labels. The challenges seen in the US raw industry with the FDA zero tolerance policy on pathogens is an example of how some regulations can hinder and not help an industry.

If possible we also believe one objective of this study is to also explain to Canadian's that this "lack of regulation" also provides them with access to more affordable and extensive raw food choices that our pet parents in the US can not get access to within pet specialty.

Thank you for sharing this information with us!!! We are excited to help show the world who you are!