Are raw pet foods better than canned or kibble foods?

Raw diets, both home-prepared and commercial, have become more popular. Advocates of raw diets claim benefits ranging from improved longevity to superior oral or general health and even disease resolution (especially gastrointestinal disease). Often the benefits of providing natural enzymes and other substances that may be altered or destroyed by cooking are also cited. However, proof for these purported benefits is currently restricted to testimonials, and no published peer-reviewed studies exist to support claims made by raw diet advocates. No studies have examined differences in animals fed raw animal products to those fed any other type of diet (kibble, canned, or home cooked) with the exception of looking at the effects on digestibility. Typically raw meats (but not other uncooked foods like grains or starches) are slightly more digestible than cooked meat.

There are risks and concerns associated with the feeding of raw diets. One of these is the risk of nutritional imbalances, which is a reality for both home-prepared and commercial raw meat diets. Another important risk is related to bacterial or parasitic contamination. Of course, food poisoning is also a major concern for people, and the public health aspects of feeding raw foods to pets cannot be overlooked. Safe and proper handling of raw foods is crucial for reducing the risk, but safety cannot be guaranteed. At this time, the vast majority of purported benefits of feeding raw foods remain unproven, while the risks and consequences have been documented. It is best to discuss the choice of feeding raw foods with your veterinarian so that an informed decision can be made with regard to your pet’s diet.
Are commercially available pet foods safe and healthful?

Commercially available pet foods have been used successfully for years. There are many kinds of foods available, from canned to dry. Some are complete and balanced and others are meant for supplemental or intermittent feeding. Safety problems (with regard to both nutritional adequacy and toxin/microbiological contamination) are occasionally documented in both commercial foods as well as home-prepared human foods. Most manufacturers utilize sophisticated mechanisms for quality control and food safety, including screening and reporting systems. As such, commercial foods remain a consistent, safe, and healthful option for feeding pets.