



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504

<http://feinstein.senate.gov>

October 21, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

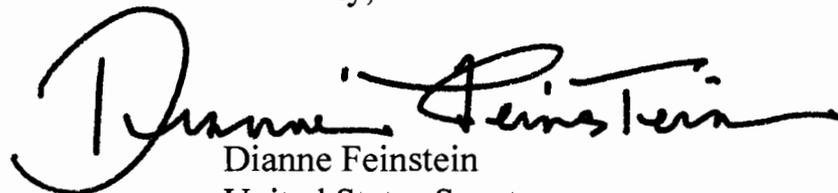
I write to urge you to implement a zero-tolerance policy for antibiotic resistant *Salmonella* in all raw meat and poultry products by declaring the pathogen an “adulterant”.

In light of the recent multi-state outbreaks of antibiotic resistant *Salmonella*, the time has come for USDA to abolish the current “performance standard” in favor of a more restrictive standard that regulates the pathogen as an “adulterant” under the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act. As you know, under the current “performance standard,” USDA inspectors aim to allow less than 7.5 percent of young chicken to be contaminated with *Salmonella*. But USDA’s own data show that actual contamination rates are far higher, averaging 24.02 percent nationwide. This is clearly an unacceptable standard for a pathogen as dangerous and hard to treat as antibiotic resistant *Salmonella*.

The unfortunate truth is that the recent outbreak is just a part of a larger trend—antibiotic resistant foodborne pathogens are becoming more and more prevalent even as the industry resists commonsense reforms that mandate the judicious use of antimicrobial drugs. The problem has now become dire, and consumers need the Department to take a more active role in protecting the efficacy of these lifesaving drugs. With certain strains of *Salmonella* and other pathogens that can no longer be effectively treated with the drugs physicians rely on, consumers are now paying the unfortunate dividends of a reckless policy.

As you may recall, I was among the first Members of Congress to call for expanding the list of pathogens considered adulterants in 2010, and I was among the first to commend your decision to reclassify six strains of *E. coli* as adulterants in 2011. I am once again calling on you to protect public health by taking a zero-tolerance stand on dangerous antibiotic resistant *Salmonella* and hope you will quickly respond to my request. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to working with you to improve the safety of our food supply. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or have your staff contact Devin Rhinerson at (202) 224-2004.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dianne Feinstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator