

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 19, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
United States Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We are deeply troubled that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is refusing to provide the public with critical information regarding a deadly strain of multidrug-resistant *Salmonella* linked to raw turkey products. USDA's failure to provide identifying information for contaminated turkey to the public in advance of the holiday season is simply unconscionable. As such, we demand that you reverse course and immediately disclose the names of the slaughter facilities and processing plants—and, if possible, the consumer-level brand names—linked to this dangerous outbreak, so that Americans across the country can come together without worrying for the safety of their friends, family, and loved ones.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that 164 people from 35 states, including three people in Connecticut and twelve in New York, have been infected with a strain of *Salmonella* Reading linked to a variety of raw turkey products¹. This has resulted in 63 hospitalizations and one known death, since the first case became known in November, 2017². Disturbingly, CDC tests have shown that certain bacteria samples from sick patients are resistant to antibiotics³.

According to CDC, children below the age of five, adults above the age of 65, and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk of developing serious illness after *Salmonella* exposure, which could result in hospitalization or even death⁴. While consumers should always take safety precautions when handling and cooking poultry and meat, Americans rely on federal agencies, such as USDA, to keep their families safe from potentially life threatening food safety threats such as this one.

CDC and USDA maintain that they have not identified a source, single common supplier, or specific product for recall. However, sampling of raw turkey products conducted by the

¹ "Outbreak of Multidrug-Resistant *Salmonella* Infections Linked to Raw Turkey Products." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. November 08, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/reading-07-18/index.html>.

² Outbreak of Multidrug-Resistant *Salmonella* Infections Linked to Raw Turkey Products.

³ Roberts, Catherine. "CDC Reports Widespread *Salmonella* Outbreak From Eating Turkey." Consumer Reports. November 14, 2018. <https://www.consumerreports.org/salmonella/salmonella-outbreak-in-turkey/>.

⁴ Outbreak of Multidrug-Resistant *Salmonella* Infections Linked to Raw Turkey Products.

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service identified this outbreak strain at 22 slaughter and 7 processing establishments⁵.

We urge USDA to disclose this potentially life-saving information to the public before any more individuals are infected by this outbreak. Every moment that USDA neglects its responsibility to ensure that the turkey eaten across the country is safe, the health of Americans is jeopardized. We look forward to your timely response outlining the steps USDA will take to prioritize public health and American lives during this holiday season.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senate

⁵ Outbreak of Multidrug-Resistant Salmonella Infections Linked to Raw Turkey Products.