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## **Bacteria on Poultry Puts Twin Cities Consumers at Risk, New Study Finds**

### **Chicken and Turkey From Area Groceries Test Positive for Resistant Microbes**

Minneapolis — The first study to examine the presence of multiple antibiotic-resistant bacteria in brand-name poultry products finds that many Twin Cities consumers, along with their chicken and turkey, are ingesting bacteria resistant to important human antibiotics like Ciprofloxacin (Cipro), Synercid, and Tetracycline.

According to independent laboratory tests commissioned by Sierra Club and the Minneapolis-based Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, 95% of the whole chickens tested were contaminated with *Campylobacter* bacteria – 62% of the *Campylobacter* tested were resistant to 1 or multiple antibiotics. *Salmonella* bacteria were found in 45% of ground turkey purchased, and 62% of *Salmonella* from turkey tested for resistance was found resistant to 1 or more antibiotics. *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* bacteria are the two most common bacterial causes of U.S. foodborne illness, and are responsible for over 3.3 million infections and more than 650 deaths every year.

“Most patients with bacterial food poisoning don’t need to be treated with antibiotics. But for those whose infections spread beyond the intestine, antibiotic treatment can be lifesaving,” said David Wallinga, M.D., Co-Director of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy’s Food and Health Program. “As bacteria on food get more and more resistant to the antibiotics doctors rely on for treating infections, it puts patients’ lives at risk. This study confirms that supermarket chicken or turkey can be an important source of drug-resistant infections.”

The study was conducted on 200 fresh whole chickens and 200 packages of ground turkey purchased from grocery stores in Minneapolis and Des Moines. Whole chickens tested included two popular brands, Country Pride and Gold’N Plump, owned by ConAgra Poultry Group and St. Cloud-based Gold’N Plump Poultry, respectively. Ground turkey tested belonged to the Jennie-O and Honeysuckle White brands. Jennie-O Turkey Store, Inc., is a subsidiary of Austin-based Hormel Foods, and Honeysuckle White is a subsidiary of Minnetonka-based Cargill, Inc.

Other findings of the lab tests include:

- Both *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* contaminated 14% of the Gold’N Plump chickens and 32% of the Country Pride chickens that were tested for both microbes.
- More than 6% of *Campylobacter* from chickens, and more than 8% of *Campylobacter* from all poultry subsequently tested for resistance was found resistant to Cipro. Cipro is the “medicine of choice” for presumptively treating severe cases of bacterial food poisoning, as well as traveler’s diarrhea and other infections in adults. FDA has estimated (2001) that more than 153,000 people contracted Cipro-resistant *Campylobacter* from eating contaminated chicken in 1999.

- One package of Jennie-O ground turkey was contaminated both with *Salmonella* resistant to 4 antibiotics, and *Campylobacter* resistant to 6 antibiotics, including to Cipro.
- Twenty percent of Country Pride chicken, and 15% of Gold’N Plump chicken carried *Salmonella*. Among the *Salmonella* bacteria from chicken tested for resistance, 6% were resistant to 4 or more antibiotics.
- More than 90% of *Enterococci* bacteria recovered from chicken or turkey, and tested for resistance, was resistant to the critical human antibiotic, Synercid. Strains of resistant *Enterococci* are a growing cause of infections and deaths in hospitals; Synercid is one of the few antibiotics still effective against them.

For decades, antibiotics have dramatically reduced illness and death from bacterial infections. The effectiveness of these life-saving drugs has begun to wane because antibiotics are being overused. An important source of overuse is factory poultry and livestock farms, which routinely feed antibiotics to animals that aren’t sick—both to promote growth and to compensate for crowded, stress-inducing and unsanitary conditions that are conducive to infection.

Scientific consensus now says that antibiotic use in food animals contributes to antibiotic resistant bacteria transferred to humans, mainly through contaminated food. The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates that 70% of all antibiotics in the U.S. are fed to pigs, poultry and cattle for reasons other than treating disease. The majority of such medicines are “medically important,” and are identical, or nearly so, to human antibiotics.

“Fortunately, consuming meat with antibiotic-resistant bacteria is not inevitable,” said Kendra Kimbirauskas, Sierra Club’s Minnesota-based Antibiotics in Agriculture Organizer. “Shoppers can look for meat from animals raised without antibiotics and can urge their grocery stores and favorite restaurants to offer the same. Consumers should also cook meat thoroughly and follow safe meat-handling procedures. In the end, however, the best solution is for poultry producers to stop giving antibiotics to birds or flocks that aren’t sick.”

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy promotes resilient family farms, rural communities and ecosystems around the world through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy.

The full report and Appendix A and Appendix B can be found at:

Report:

[http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/library/admin/uploadedfiles/showfile.cfm?FileName=Poultry\\_on\\_Antibiotics\\_Hazards\\_to\\_Human\\_Health.pdf](http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/library/admin/uploadedfiles/showfile.cfm?FileName=Poultry_on_Antibiotics_Hazards_to_Human_Health.pdf)

Appendix A:

[http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/library/admin/uploadedfiles/showfile.cfm?FileName=Poultry\\_on\\_Antibiotics\\_Appendix\\_A.pdf](http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/library/admin/uploadedfiles/showfile.cfm?FileName=Poultry_on_Antibiotics_Appendix_A.pdf)

Appendix B:

[http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/library/admin/uploadedfiles/showfile.cfm?FileName=Poultry\\_on\\_Antibiotics\\_Appendix\\_B.pdf](http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth/library/admin/uploadedfiles/showfile.cfm?FileName=Poultry_on_Antibiotics_Appendix_B.pdf)