FARMFORWARD

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WHY SALMONELLA KEEPS SHOWING UP IN POULTRY & WHAT THE USDA ISN'T DOING ABOUT IT

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Cover photograph by Jo-Anne McArthur / We Animals

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Top poultry brands routinely violate salmonella standards, and USDA is letting them do it. USDA has found that companies like Perdue, Foster Farms, Cargill, Butterball, and Costco's supplier (Lincoln Premium Poultry) have persistently high rates of salmonella contamination in products destined for grocery stores across the country, but USDA does nothing to prevent these contaminated products from reaching consumers. At the same time, certain companies with high rates of salmonella contamination have also violated humane handling guidelines—standards for treating animals with care during slaughter, including proper stunning and minimizing stress and suffering—exacerbating the risk of contamination even further.

With little explanation, the Trump administration shelved a recent proposal to strengthen USDA authority to stop the sale of contaminated poultry products. Meanwhile, contaminated poultry remains the *leading cause* of foodborne-illness-related deaths in America, with the CDC estimating that salmonella alone infects an estimated 1.28 million people per year, a full one-quarter of whom are infected by poultry.

Farm Forward analyzed USDA salmonella regulations, inspection records, and humane handling reports to investigate the role of regulatory failures, industry practices, and lack of enforcement in enabling dangerous levels of salmonella contamination in the poultry supply chain. Our research led to three key findings:

1. **USDA permits dangerous levels of salmonella and lacks the authority to enforce standards.** The agency sets lenient contamination standards and cannot suspend slaughter or processing plants that consistently exceed them, nor can it recall or stop the sale of contaminated products, leading to contaminated chicken routinely reaching grocery store shelves. Over the past five years, the USDA has issued no criminal penalties, civil penalties, administrative penalties, or product withholdings due to excessive salmonella levels despite its own testing revealing the chronic failure of many plants to meet standards.
2. **Top poultry brands have repeatedly failed salmonella contamination standards.** Companies like Perdue, Foster Farms, Cargill, Butterball, and Costco's supplier (Lincoln Premium Poultry) have repeatedly received the USDA's worst rating (Category 3) for excessive salmonella contamination in certain products across multiple years. Despite this consistent noncompliance, these companies have faced no meaningful consequences.
3. **Inhumane treatment of birds fuels higher rates of salmonella contamination.** Many of the same companies that fail salmonella standards have also failed standards for humane handling of animals. Industry practices such as overcrowding, poor handling, and high-speed slaughter increase stress and illness in birds, directly contributing to the spread of foodborne illness.

Despite known risks and widespread contamination, USDA continues to allow contaminated poultry into the marketplace, failing to protect both public health and animal welfare.

BACKGROUND

Salmonellosis is one of the most common foodborne illnesses in the United States. Salmonella annually infects 1.28 million people, causes 12,500 hospitalizations, and leads to an estimated 238 deaths, as well as costs an estimated $2.8 billion.[1] Chicken and turkey products are leading sources of salmonella infections, responsible for 25% of outbreaks or 320,000 cases per year. Poultry meat is the nation's leading cause of death via foodborne illness.[2] Salmonella is now commonplace in global animal agriculture due to high-density confinement, poor waste management, and unsanitary practices.[3] Poultry production, in particular, creates ideal conditions for its spread.[4]

According to the CDC, one in 25 packages of chicken sold in local grocery stores is contaminated with salmonella.[5] In a recent study by Consumer Reports, however, researchers found that the number is likely much higher: one-third of samples of ground chicken they tested from grocery stores across the country were contaminated with salmonella, and more than one-third of these were from Perdue (one of the top chicken companies in the country).[6] Of those, 91% tested positive for one of three *Salmonella* subspecies that pose the greatest threat to human health, and all identified strains were resistant to one or more antibiotics.[7]

Despite longstanding federal awareness of the risks of salmonella, efforts to reduce infections have failed. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) sets decade-long goals to reduce salmonella infections, but these benchmarks have repeatedly gone unmet.[8] In 2010, the actual rate of infections was about twice the target.[9] For 2020, HHS raised the allowable target, setting a goal almost twice as high as the 2010 benchmark. Even so, industry progress fell short, reaching only about half of the reduction needed.[10] This partial improvement is less meaningful given the higher target, which may explain why USDA concluded that "our current approach to salmonella has not led to a demonstrable reduction in salmonella."[11] Given this track record, the 2030 goal—a

Poultry meat is the nation's leading cause of death via foodborne illness.

1 CDC, "Estimates: Burden of Foodborne Illness in the United States," March 19, 2025.
2 CDC, "Foodborne Illness Source Estimates," March 19, 2025.
3 S. Shaji, R.K. Selvaraj, R. Shanmugasundaram," Salmonella Infection in Poultry: A Review on the Pathogen and Control Strategies," *Microorganisms* 11, no. 11: 2814, November 20, 2023.
4 L. Kovács, et al., "Biosecurity Implications, Transmission Routes and Modes of Economically Important Diseases in Domestic Fowl and Turkey," *Veterinary Sciences* 12, no. 391 (2025).
5 CDC, "Chicken and Food Poisoning," Apr 29, 2024.
6 Lisa L. Gill, "Is Our Ground Meat Safe to Eat?," *Consumer Reports*, June 30, 2022.
7 Gill, "Is Our Ground Meat Safe?"
8 USDA-FSIS, "Salmonella Framework for Raw Poultry Products: A Proposed Rule by the Food Safety and Inspection Service," *Federal Register*, 9 CFR Part 381, August 8, 2024.
9 Pew Charitable Trust, "Too Slow: An Analysis of the 2011 Salmonella Ground Turkey Outbreak and Recommendations for Improving Detection and Response," April 2, 2013.
10 Department of Health and Human Services Healthy People 2030, "Reduce infections caused by salmonella — FS-04."
11 USDA-FSIS, "Proposed Regulatory Framework to Reduce Salmonella Illnesses Attributable to Poultry," last updated October 14, 2022.

25% reduction in yearly infections—appears unlikely to be met.

In our full report, "How the USDA and the US Poultry Industry Are Failing to Protect Americans from Foodborne Disease," Farm Forward investigated industry and regulatory practices, FSIS data, top companies with contaminated plants, and the link between inhumane handling of birds and foodborne illness. Findings reveal how the poultry industry's persistent failure to prevent salmonella outbreaks, combined with the government's inability to enforce effective safeguards, poses a significant risk to public health. Drawn from that analysis, this issue brief details how top chicken and turkey companies like Perdue, Foster Farms, Cargill, Butterball, and Costco's supplier (Lincoln Premium Poultry) take advantage of this lack of enforcement, selling products contaminated with salmonella in grocery stores around the country.

USDA PERMITS DANGEROUS *LEVELS OF SALMONELLA*

Salmonella contamination standards and their failures permit major poultry companies to routinely violate their provisions and sell chicken and turkey contaminated with high levels of salmonella.

USDA FSIS—the government agency responsible for preventing salmonella contamination in meat, dairy, and eggs—does not meaningfully regulate salmonella in poultry. FSIS's "performance standards" that track salmonella in the industry allow for high levels of salmonella contamination.

FSIS performance standards are based on the percentage of a plant's raw poultry products sampled that test positive for organisms of any *Salmonella* species. The agency assigns each product type a rating in one of three categories:[12]

4. **Category 1**, the best rating, means that an establishment's percentage of products testing positive for salmonella has been at or below half of the mandated standard.
5. **Category 2** means that establishments have met the standard.
6. **Category 3** is reserved for establishments that exceed the maximum allowable percentages and, thus, fail the standard.

The maximum allowable percentage of positive results depends on the type of poultry product, based on the risk of contamination it poses. The more processed a poultry product is, the higher the risk of cross-contamination.

USDA allows for salmonella contamination of up to:

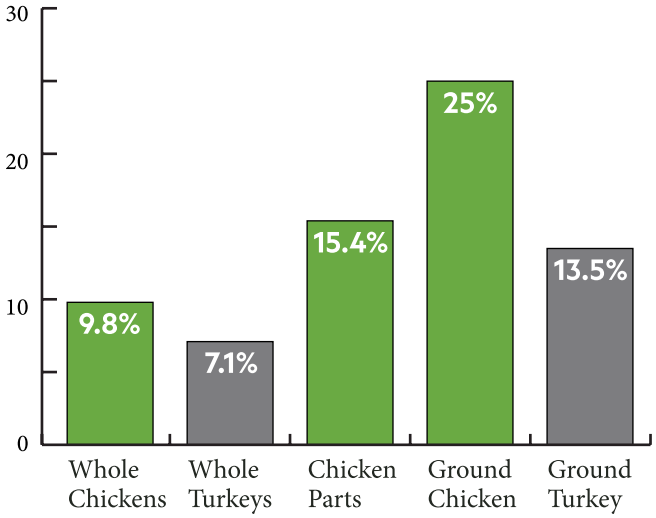
- 25% of ground chicken products and 13.5%of turkey products
- 15.4% of chicken parts (e.g., breasts, drumsticks, thighs, and wings)
- 9.8% of whole chickens and 7.1% of whole turkeys

Therefore, a plant that gets a Category 3 rating is consistently shipping out chicken for sale that has **failed** these standards by, for example, having more than 25% of its ground chicken test positive for salmonella.

This also means that even the best category rating allows for a significant percentage of contaminated meat to enter the food supply. It would be acceptable, for instance, for even

USDA Allowed Salmonella Levels

Percentage of Total Production



12 USDA-FSIS, "FSIS Salmonella Verification Testing Program," last updated September 5, 2025. Note: FSIS salmonella performance standard category determinations require a minimum number of salmonella sample results from a 52-week moving window.

a best-in-class Category 1 chicken plant to have 12% of its ground meat test positive for salmonella. While some categories of poultry products pose greater danger than others, consumers face a significant risk of contamination from all raw chicken and turkey products, even those that receive the government's best rating.

But many consumers do not buy from companies with the best rating, because many of the biggest poultry companies are routinely classified as Category 3.

This is in sharp contrast to the European Union, which classifies all species of Salmonella as adulterants and has a zero-tolerance policy for salmonella in raw and cooked poultry products.

Farm Forward's analysis of FSIS data between 2020 and 2025 shows that some slaughterhouses and processing plants tested positive for salmonella in nearly every monthly inspection report.[13] These facilities continued to produce and distribute poultry products to the public, well aware that some of their products were contaminated.

USDA knows it has a problem. Every decade, the Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People Initiative sets goals for reducing salmonella infections among Americans. However, the salmonella targets for the past two decades were not met, and FSIS admitted that its "current approach to salmonella has not led to a demonstrable reduction in salmonella infections."[14] Despite decades of policy reforms, USDA has not managed to control or regulate salmonella (see Appendix A). This is in sharp contrast to the European Union, which classifies all species of *Salmonella* as adulterants and has a zero-tolerance policy for salmonella in raw and cooked poultry products.

In an effort to address the agency's serious deficiencies in regulating salmonella, in August 2024, FSIS proposed a significant step forward: a landmark rule, the "*Salmonella* Framework for Raw Poultry," that would have allowed USDA to classify salmonella as an "adulterant," giving the agency the authority to recall, condemn, or stop the sale of poultry products contaminated with certain levels of salmonella.[15] However, in April 2025, the Trump administration withdrew the proposed rule with little explanation, leaving longstanding gaps in salmonella control unaddressed, and leaving USDA without the power to regulate the potential for outbreaks.[16]

As a result, the poultry industry operates without accountability and continues to sell products contaminated with salmonella, putting public health at risk in the pursuit of efficiency and profit.

13 See "How the USDA and the US Poultry Industry Are Failing to Protect Americans from Foodborne Disease," *Farm Forward*, Sept 2025, p.
14 USDA-FSIS, "Proposed Regulatory Framework."
15 USDA-FSIS, "Salmonella Framework."
16 USDA-FSIS, "Proposed Regulatory Framework."

MAJOR POULTRY BRANDS SELL PRODUCTS WITH HIGH *LEVELS OF SALMONELLA CONTAMINATION*

An analysis by Farm Forward reveals that many leading poultry brands routinely fail to meet even the permissive FSIS salmonella performance standards, putting consumers at risk of taking home contaminated meat. Numerous well-known brands—including Butterball, Perdue, Costco, Foster Farms, Pitman Farms, and Cargill—had one or more facilities receive a Category 3 rating in both 2023 and 2024 (see Appendix B).

Some companies had particularly poor track records, with **100% of their plants rated Category 3** across both years. These include:

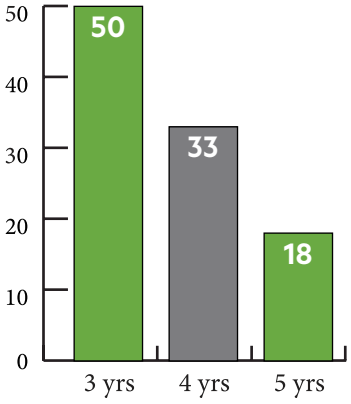
- Perdue turkey (sells under the Perdue and Harvestland brands)
- Lincoln Premium Poultry (Costco-owned chicken company)
- Pitman Farms chicken (sells under Mary's, Fulton Valley, Sweetwater Creek, Shelton's)
- Foster Poultry Farms (turkey)
- Grimaud Farms (chicken)
- Michigan Turkey Products (sells under Great Lakes, Michigan Turkey)

Additionally, the following companies had 50% of their plants in Category 3 both years:

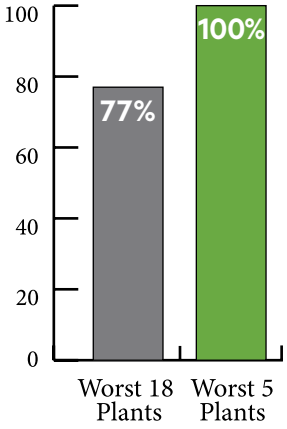
- Butterball turkey
- Cargill turkey
- Foster Farms chicken.

Over the five years from 2020 to 2024, 18 plants received Category 3 (fail) ratings each year. Thirty-three plants received the rating in at least four out of five years, and 50 plants received the rating in at least three out of five years. Further analysis of the 18 most consistently failing plants—those rated Category 3 in all five years—showed that each was in Category 3 for at least 77% of the 60 monthly FSIS reports reviewed. Even more alarmingly, five plants (including ones owned and operated by Butterball, Cargill, and Koch) were rated Category 3 in all 60 reports, meaning these plants exceeded the maximum allowable percentage of salmonella contamination every single month for at least five years. (see Appendix C).

Number of Plants Rated Category 3 (2020-24)



Portion of 2020-24 Category 3 Rating Was Received



USDA-FSIS LACKS AUTHORITY *TO ENFORCE SALMONELLA STANDARDS*

Farm Forward's investigation found no evidence of enforcement of the FSIS salmonella performance standards. This is because USDA does not have the authority to enforce the standards it sets: it cannot suspend or shut down a plant for high contamination rates, and it cannot issue recalls of contaminated products. According to FSIS Quarterly Enforcement Records, over the past five years, there have been no criminal penalties, civil penalties, administrative penalties, or product withholdings due to excessive salmonella levels. Farm Forward confirmed with FSIS that it does not take any enforcement action against plants that chronically exceed allowable salmonella levels, nor do they withhold products from commerce based on a plant's salmonella rating.[17] FSIS posts the results of its poultry plant inspections on its website, but the data is technical and difficult to find. Beyond this, FSIS takes no action to protect the public.

FSIS's current strategy relies on voluntary industry compliance and publicly posting test results. While this approach may influence some producers, many continue to exceed salmonella limits year after year. Test results are published as highly technical data that is difficult for consumers to find or understand. Farm Forward concludes—and FSIS confirms—that FSIS is not meaningfully regulating salmonella contamination. The poultry industry, despite its long history of contamination issues, is expected to self-regulate, with no enforceable accountability.

Without real consequences for noncompliance, the responsibility shifts to consumers to either research FSIS data and avoid buying from high-risk brands—an unrealistic burden resulting from a system that publicly shares data but fails to act on it—or simply bear the risk of joining the 1.35 million Americans who suffer from salmonella infection every year.

17 Farm Forward submitted a query to askFSIS, a USDA service that answers questions from the public about meat, poultry, and egg product inspections, inquiring whether the agency takes any enforcement actions for salmonella-contaminated poultry. FSIS confirmed that it does not. In its response to Farm Forward, FSIS added: "Failure to meet the salmonella performance standards triggers additional inspection follow up, both in sampling and in food safety program review, which may identify non-compliances or enforcement issues." USDA-FSIS, AskFSIS Case Number 01854945, July 8, 2025. In other words, exceeding salmonella performance standards results in additional monitoring, which may disclose issues that are non-compliances with other FSIS regulations, but there are no consequences for repeatedly exceeding salmonella sampling standards.

INHUMANE TREATMENT OF BIRDS *FUELS HIGHER RATES OF SALMONELLA CONTAMINATION*

In addition to routinely exceeding salmonella contamination thresholds, many of the nation's top poultry companies repeatedly violate humane handling standards. Inhumane treatment of birds raises serious concerns about not only animal welfare but also salmonella contamination. The USDA's failures in food regulation extend beyond its inability to enforce salmonella standards and include a persistent lack of meaningful regulation regarding live bird handling, a known contributor to foodborne illnesses.

While it is widely accepted that live bird handling affects meat quality, its role in spreading pathogens like salmonella, e. coli, and campylobacter is often overlooked. Industrial farming practices—such as overcrowding, exposure to extreme temperatures, feed withdrawal, and genetic modification—compromise animal welfare and weaken birds' immune systems, making them more vulnerable to foodborne illness.[18]

To investigate this connection, Farm Forward compared FSIS humane handling (good commercial practices, or GCP) violation records with salmonella testing results. The analysis revealed multiple companies with overlapping periods of documented bird mistreatment and Category 3 salmonella contamination ratings. This pattern highlights USDA's failure to effectively regulate live bird handling, allowing companies to repeatedly violate both welfare and salmonella standards with little or no consequence.

Top Retail Companies Violate Humane Handling and Salmonella Standards

Despite underreporting of violations (plants are not required to maintain GCP records), at least nine major poultry producers had at least one plant with both excessive humane handling violations and Category 3 salmonella ratings during the same period from 2020 to 2024 (see Appendix D). These include:

- Foster Farms
- Pitman Farms
- Case Farms
- Pine Manor
- New Market Poultry
- Perdue
- Cargill
- Pine Creek Processing
- Lincoln Premium Poultry

18 A.C. Gomes et al., "Overcrowding Stress Decreases Macrophage Activity and Increases Salmonella Enteritidis Invasion in Broiler Chickens," *Avian Pathology* 43, no. 1 (2014): 82-90; Luigi Iannetti et al., "Animal Welfare and Microbiological Safety of Poultry Meat: Impact of Different At-farm Animal Welfare Levels on At-slaughterhouse Campylobacter and Salmonella Contamination," *Food Control*, 109 (2020): 106921; J.R. Nelson et al., "Reducing Stress Susceptibility of Broiler Chickens by Supplementing a Yeast Fermentation Product in the Feed or Drinking Water," *Animals (Basel)* 8, no. 10 (2018): 173; L.A. Boyle, K. O'Driscoll, "Animal Welfare: An Essential Component in Food Safety and Quality," in R. Prugger, K. Jordan, F. Butler, and J. Hoorfar, *Food Chain Integrity: A Holistic Approach to Food Traceability, Safety, Quality and Authenticity*, Woodhead Publishing (2011): 169-184.

Lincoln Premium Poultry Foster Farms' plant (P6164A) in Kelso, WA, for instance, had the following inhumane handling incident documented in this period:

> **"While observing the stunned and exsanguinating carcasses entering the scalder, the CSI [USDA Consumer Safety Inspector] observed the establishment employee stationed just prior to the scalders shut the line off and remove a live bird from the line and take it back to the live hang area. After the employee returned to their station and turned the line back on, the CSI observed a bird still alive and conscious lifting its head and turning it from side to side looking at its surroundings just before it entered the scalder … The carcass exhibited obvious signs of being alive when it entered the scalder."**[19]

… a bird still alive and conscious lifting its head and turning it from side to side looking at its surroundings just before it entered the scalder …

Many other recorded instances of inhumane handling align with Category 3 salmonella contamination at plants from these companies (See Appendix C of our full salmonella report for narrative descriptions). Even with limited documentation, this overlap points to systemic abuse and a connection between poor animal welfare and contaminated food. Stronger enforcement of both GCP and salmonella standards is essential to protect public health.

USDA Recognizes the Increased Risk of Salmonella in Inhumane Practices & Does Little to Regulate Live Bird Handling

The USDA itself has acknowledged the link between inhumane handling and foodborne illness transmission. In 2010, the agency's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) reported:

> Exposure of farm animals to stressors will lead to increased levels of foodborne pathogens in the gastrointestinal tract, and increased risk of contamination of their carcasses … [thus,] stress in farm animals has a significant deleterious effect on food safety through different potential mechanisms affecting the susceptibility of farm animals to infections as well as the carriage and shedding of foodborne pathogens.[20]

Despite this recognition, inhumane treatment of poultry remains widespread. From selective breeding for rapid growth to high-speed slaughter lines and overcrowded sheds, birds are subjected to stressful conditions that increase their disease risk.[21] The absence of any federal humane slaughter law for poultry (birds are excluded from the Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act) allows poor treatment to persist.[22]

In 2005, USDA issued a policy notice reminding poultry processors that birds must be handled in accordance with "good commercial practices" (GCPs) under the Poultry Products

19 USDA-FSIS, Memorandum of Interview (MOI) issued to Foster Poultry Farms (P6164A), "Inspection Task Data," March 21, 2024.

20 M. Rostagno, "Stress in Farm Animals and Food Safety: Is there a Connection?," USDA-ARS Livestock Behavior Research Unit, Fall 2010.

21 Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), "The Welfare of Birds at Slaughter in the United States: The Need For Government Regulation," November 2020; B.Y. Kwon, J. Park, D.H Kim, and K.W. Lee, "Assessment of Welfare Problems in Broilers: Focus on Musculoskeletal Problems Associated with Their Rapid Growth," *Animals (Basel)* 14, no. 7 (2024): 1116; Sara Shields and Michael Greger, "Animal Welfare and Food Safety Aspects of Confining Broiler Chickens to Cages," *Animals (Basel)* 3, no. 2 (2013): 386-400.

22 Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), "The Welfare of Birds at Slaughter in the United States." See USDA National Agricultural Library, "Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act."

Inspection Act (PPIA). The notice acknowledged that improper handling increases the likelihood of product contamination by pathogens due to bruising or death by means other than slaughter.

Following the notice, FSIS inspectors began documenting GCP violations. A Noncompliance Record (NR) may be issued if inspectors observe:

- An ongoing pattern or trend of birds dying otherwise than by slaughter (e.g., repeatedly entering the scalding tank while still breathing);
- An ongoing pattern or trend of birds not being appropriately bled out (e.g., as evidenced by equipment malfunction that results in increased numbers or clusters of cadavers being disposed of or condemned); or
- An ongoing pattern or trend of establishment personnel intentionally and repeatedly mistreating birds.[23]

If inspectors cannot confirm a pattern or intention to harm the birds, a Memorandum of Interview (MOI) may be issued instead.[24] The agency notes the following are *not prohibited practices* but can be cause for issuing an MOI:

- Establishment employees breaking the legs of birds to hold the birds in the shackles, squeezing them into shackles, or otherwise mishandling birds while transferring them from the cages to the shackles;
- Birds frozen inside cages or frozen to the cages themselves in cold weather; or
- Birds dying from heat exhaustion, the main observable symptom of which is birds panting heavily, in addition to dead or dying birds in cages.[25]

The same companies cited for inhumane handling are frequently among those with the highest salmonella contamination rates—underscoring USDA's failure to prevent or penalize conditions that permit ongoing animal suffering and put public health at risk.

Photograph by Jo-Anne McArthur / We Animals

23 USDA-FSIS, "Verification of Poultry Good Commercial Practices," July 3, 2018.
24 USDA-FSIS, "Verification."
25 USDA-FSIS, "Verification."

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of persistently high rates of salmonella, substantial changes to USDA policy are necessary.

Although USDA has maintained salmonella performance standards for poultry for 30 years, the agency has no effective enforcement mechanism. The agency requires testing and posts test results to encourage voluntary industry compliance with its standards, but issues no meaningful consequences for even repeat offenses of excessive salmonella levels. Plants continue to operate without interruption, and salmonella infections have remained consistently high over the last two decades.26 USDA has delegated responsibility for the enforcement of its salmonella standards to the poultry and food industries and to American consumers. But the industry has little incentive to control salmonella in its plants, and most consumers are not aware of the salmonella verification program or know how to access relevant reports to make an informed decision about what they purchase. Even if individuals could locate the posted salmonella ratings, it is difficult to understand the implications of the information and how it relates to the poultry products sold by major brands sold by local grocers.

For salmonella performance standards to be meaningful and relevant in reducing foodborne contamination, and to protect the American public from foodborne salmonella, Farm Forward urges the federal government to take the following actions:

- **Re-publish the August 2024 proposed Salmonella Framework for Raw Poultry and declare salmonella at certain levels to be an adulterant, in effect prohibiting the sale of salmonella-contaminated products.**
- **Investigate the extent of the association between inhumane handling at slaughter plants and salmonella levels, enforce GCPs for the handling of live birds, and include requirements for handling live birds in any future salmonella regulation.**

These recommendations are first steps to address the problem of salmonella contamination in poultry. They are the bare minimum requirements for protecting public health. Until these policies are implemented, salmonella will continue to contaminate poultry at levels that imperil public health.

26 USDA-FSIS, "Salmonella Framework."

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Timeline of Key Policy Developments in Salmonella Regulation

July 1996 FSIS establishes a testing program for salmonella as part of the newly passed "Pathogen Reduction: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Systems" (HACCP) rule. The HACCP framework requires poultry slaughter and processing plants to reduce salmonella contamination in poultry, and enables FSIS to verify whether poultry slaughter and processing plants have effective controls in place to limit the spread of the pathogen.[27]

Feb 2016 FSIS passes new salmonella "performance standards," a three-category rating system for evaluating and tracking the level of salmonella contamination in poultry plants. The agency announces that it will begin posting results of its inspections to indicate the category rating for each plant.[28]

Nov 2018 FSIS confirms its plan to post the results of its salmonella testing on its website and announces that this data will be updated monthly with the category ratings for each plant.[29]

Oct 2021 FSIS begins to gather information to inform its launch of a stronger, more comprehensive effort to reduce salmonella contamination of poultry products. [30]

Oct 2022 FSIS releases a draft salmonella framework for raw poultry products that declares certain poultry products with unacceptable levels of salmonella as "adulterated," defined under the Poultry Products Inspection Act as being unsafe and/or produced under unsanitary conditions. Classifying salmonella as an adulterant would give FSIS the power to stop products with certain levels of contamination from entering the food supply.[31]

May 2024 FSIS follows up on its 2022 draft framework, proposing that not-ready-to-eat breaded stuffed chicken products that contain salmonella at certain levels should also be considered adulterated. FSIS sets a final determination date of May 1, 2025 for the new proposal.[32]

Aug 2024 FSIS releases a formal salmonella framework that establishes standards under which raw poultry with certain levels of salmonella can be considered adulterated.[33]

27 USDA-FSIS, "Final Rule: Pathogen Reduction: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems," *Federal Register*, Vol. 61, No. 144, July 25, 1996, 38806-38989.
28 USDA-FSIS, "Notice: New Performance Standards for Salmonella and Campylobacter in Not-Ready-to-Eat Comminuted Chicken and Turkey Products and Raw Chicken Parts and Changes to Related Agency Verification Procedures," *Federal Register*, Vol. 81, No. 28, Feb 11, 2016, 7285-7300.
29 USDA-FSIS, "Notice: Changes to the Salmonella and Campylobacter Verification Testing Program: Revised Categorization and Follow-Up Sampling Procedures," *Federal Register*, Vol. 83, No. 218, Nov 9, 2018, 56046-56049.
30 USDA-FSIS, "Proposed Rule and Proposed Determination: Salmonella Framework for Raw Poultry Products," *Federal Register*, Vol. 89, No. 152, Aug 7, 2024, 64678-64748.
31 USDA-FSIS, "Proposed Rule and Proposed Determination."
32 USDA-FSIS, "Final Determination: Salmonella Not Ready-to-Eat Breaded Stuffed Chicken Products," *Federal Register*, Vol. 89, No. 85, May 1, 2024, 35033-35053.
33 USDA-FSIS, "Proposed Rule and Proposed Determination."

Apr 2025 FSIS announces it is delaying, until November 2025, the proposal for declaring salmonella as an adulterant in not-ready-to-eat breaded and stuffed chicken products. FSIS also announces it is withdrawing the August 2024 proposed salmonella framework.[34]

July 2025 The USDA Secretary announces she is directing FSIS "to find a more effective and achievable approach to address salmonella in poultry products" that will "prevent unnecessary regulatory overreach."[35]

34 USDA-FSIS, "**Notice of Withdrawal: Salmonella Framework for Raw Poultry Products,**" *Federal Register*, Vol. 90, No. 79, Apr 25, 2025.

35 USDA, "**Secretary Rollins Announces New Plan to Bolster Meat and Poultry Safety, Press Release No. 0169.25**," July 15, 2025. While USDA's interest in pursuing new approaches to address salmonella contamination is encouraging, what this might entail is unclear, given that FSIS has acknowledged it does not currently have authority to take any administrative actions related to salmonella contamination other than requiring additional testing.

Appendix B: Retail Poultry Companies with Category 3 Plants in Both 2023 & 2024

Company Name	Type of Product	Retail Brands[2]	Plants in Category 3	% of Plants in Category 3
Foster Poultry Farms	Turkey	Foster Farms	1	100%
Grimaud Farms	Chicken	Grimaud Farms	1	100%
Lincoln Premium Poultry	Chicken	Costco	1	100%
Perdue Foods	Turkey	Perdue Harvestland	1	100%
Pitman Farms	Chicken	Mary's Fulton Valley Sweetwater Creek Shelton's	1	100%
Michigan Turkey Prod.	Turkey	Great Lakes Michigan Turkey	1	100%
Cargill Meat Solutions	Turkey	Honeysuckle White Turkey Shady Brook Farms	2	67%
Butterball LLC	Turkey	Butterball Carolina Turkey Just Perfect Farm to Family	3	60%
Foster Poultry Farms	Chicken	Foster Farms	3	50%
Mar-Jac Poultry	Chicken	Mar-Jac	1	33%
Perdue Foods	Chicken	Perdue Petaluma Poultry PastureBird Draper Valley	3	23%
Bachoco O.K. Foods	Chicken	TenderBird Top Chick	1	20%
George's Chicken	Chicken	George's George's Farmers Market Ozark Mountain Poultry	1	20%
Koch Foods	Chicken	Koch Foods Antioch Farms Preferred Foods Rogers Royal	1	10%
Tyson Foods	Chicken	Tyson Jimmy Dean	2 (2023), 1 (2024)	6% (2023), 3% (2024)

1 According to FSIS salmonella individual establishment categories in January of each year.
2 These names represent major company brands but not necessarily the specific brands produced at the company's Category 3 plant(s) (unless all company plants are rated Category 3).
Source: USDA-FSIS, Individual Establishment Salmonella Categories for Each Product. Spreadsheet files referencing the following sample collection periods: Jan 29, 2023 through Jan 27, 2024; Jan 28, 2024 through Jan 25, 2025. Salmonella Verification Testing Program Monthly Posting.

Appendix C: Individual Poultry Plants with the Worst Salmonella Records (2020–2024)

Company Name	Category 3 Plant Number	Location of Category 3 Plant	# of Monthly Reports in Category 3	% of Monthly Reports in Category 3
Butterball LLC	P8727	Carthage, MO	60 of 60 reports	100%
Cargill Meat Solutions	P18	Dayton, VA	60 of 60 reports	100%
Ihsan Farms LLC	P46897	Princess Anne, MD	60 of 60 reports	100%
James River Corr Ctr	P31843	State Farm, VA	60 of 60 reports	100%
Koch Foods	P19378	Cumming, GA	60 of 60 reports	100%
Perdue Foods	P2178	Georgetown, DE	57 of 60 reports	95%
Wabash Poultry Proc	P46248A	Forrest, IL	50 of 53[2] reports	94%
David Elliot Poultry Farm	P134	Scranton, PA	55 of 60 reports	92%
Lincoln Premium Poultry	P48304	Fremont, NE	54 of 59[2] reports	92%
Pelleh Poultry Corp	P44121	Swan Lake, NY	55 of 60 reports	92%
Perdue Foods	P286	Washington, IN	55 of 60 reports	92%
Butterball LLC	P7345	Mount Olive, NC	54 of 60 reports	90%
Windy Meadows Farm	P44992	Campbell, TX	54 of 60 reports	90%
Perdue Foods	P1243	Rockingham, NC	53 of 60 reports	88%
Cargill Meat Solutions	P963	Springdale, AR	52 of 60 reports	87%
Baffoni's Poultry Farm	P9378	Johnston, RI	51 of 60 reports	85%
O.K. Foods	P165M	Muldrow, OK	48 of 60 reports	80%
Pitman Farms	P27389	Sanger, CA	46 of 60 reports	77%

[1] For one or more types of poultry in FSIS monthly Salmonella Verification Testing Program report.
Source: USDA-FSIS, *Individual Establishment Salmonella Categories for each Product. Spreadsheet files referencing 2020–2024.* Salmonella Verification Testing Program Monthly Posting | Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Appendix D: Category 3 Plants with Excessive* Inhumane Handling Incidents (2020–2024)

Company Name	Plant No.	City, State	Year	# of GCP Records
Cargill Meat Solutions	P18	Dayton, VA	2022	7
			2023	10
Case Farms	P15724	Winesburg, OH	2022	7
Foster Farms Poultry	P6137	Livingston, CA	2023	5
	P6164A	Kelso, WA	2024	4
Lincoln Prem Poultry	P48304	Fremont, NE	2020	11
New Market Poultry	P4602A	New Market, VA	2020	4
			2023	5
			2024	5
Perdue Foods	P1243	Rockingham, NC	2020	9
			2021	11
			2022	7
			2024	4
Pine Creek Processing	P45525	Ridgeland, WI	2023	5
Pine Manor	P39	Orland, CA	2020	5
Pitman Farms	P27389	Sanger, CA	2020	4

* The average number of GCP records per plant per year ranges from 0.5 to 1.6. "Excessive" is being defined as 4 or more records in one year.

Source: USDA-FSIS, Poultry Good Commercial Practices Inspection Task Data *Documentation.* PDF document, last modified July 7, 2023, Inspection Task Data;" USDA-FSIS, "Frequently Requested Records: Records Related to Good Commercial Practices."

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Farm Forward was founded in 2007 as the nation's first nonprofit devoted exclusively to end factory farming. We are a team of strategists, campaigners, and thought leaders guiding the movement to change the way our world eats and farms. More information about Farm Forward's work and our other publications can be found at farmforward.com.

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