

Congress of the United States

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DeLauro, Waxman Urge USDA to Set Federal Standard for Detecting Chicken Bacteria that Causes Food Borne Disease – *Consumer Reports* investigation finds 8 out of 10 tested chickens harbored bacteria –

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Representatives Rosa L. DeLauro (CT -3) and Henry A. Waxman (CA – 30) today called on the U.S. Department of Agriculture to set a federal standard for detecting campylobacter – a bacteria found in raw chicken that causes food borne disease. The USDA has a standard that requires chicken producers to test for salmonella but it has not set a standard for detecting campylobacter. An investigation conducted by *Consumer Reports* and released today found that 8 out of 10 chickens in supermarkets are contaminated with campylobacter. This is almost double the rate of contamination in *Consumer Reports*' 2002 tests (January 2003 issue of CR).

“As the *Consumer Reports* investigation proves, the threat of bacterial contamination in our food has increased, especially given that an astonishing percentage of the salmonella and campylobacter organisms analyzed were resistant to one or more antibiotics. The evidence of our faltering food safety system continues to mount while the administration refuses to acknowledge the problem, believing that adequate safeguards are in place. This report demonstrates that safeguards are lacking, and the USDA must establish a standard for detecting campylobacter in raw chicken.”

Campylobacter, besides causing stomach upset, can lead to arthritis, meningitis, and Guillain-Barre syndrome, a neurological disorder. Campylobacter and salmonella, another disease causing organism also tested in the report, sickened more than 3.4 million Americans and killed more than 700 in 1999, the last year for which the federal Centers for Disease Control has data.

DeLauro is the ranking member of the House Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee, while Waxman is the ranking member of the House Government Reform Committee. Both lawmakers are expected to serve as chairman of their respective committees in the 110th Congress.

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