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The Honorable Ann Veneman
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

06-4170662
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February 11, 2001

97-013P-5
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Jerri Brandt

Dear Secretary Veneman,

I urge you to approve immediate publication of the proposed regulation, "Performance Standards for the Production of Processed Meat and Poultry Products." Although the USDA previously sent it to the Federal Register, it was never published.

A Listeria outbreak prompted this regulation. That outbreak sickened one hundred consumers and killed twenty-one. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that Listeria causes 500 deaths and 2300 hospitalizations per year. You now have the chance to save people's lives by approving publication of this regulation.

Listeriosis is not just a disease of the very young and the very old. People who have diabetes, cancer, or asthma are also at a higher risk for developing it, as are people on certain types of drugs, such as corticosteroids.

Current regulations do not require meat processors to test either their plants or their products for the potentially deadly Listeria bacterium, even though products containing this hazard are regularly recalled. Did you know there was a recall on cheese contaminated with Listeria on January 10, 2001? What if you would have eaten that cheese? You might have died or become seriously ill! The proposed regulation will protect you from that kind of exposure, and will save many lives. It would require meat and poultry processors to do microbial testing to insure that their food-safety controls are working.

This critical health and safety regulation should be released on an emergency basis. Please protect consumers from this deadly bacteria and approve this regulation immediately.

Sincerely,



Jerri Brandt
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Mt. Desert, ME 04660