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**Senators Still Want Answers From Antibiotic Resistance Task Force**

BY [**LYDIA ZURAW**](http://www.foodsafetynews.com/author/lzuraw/) | AUGUST 19, 2015

Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) are still waiting for answers to animal antibiotics questions posed eight months ago.

The senators originally [wrote](http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2014/12/senators-have-questions-for-interagency-task-force-for-combating-antibiotic-resistant-bacteria/) to the co-chairs of the Interagency Task Force for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria in December 2014 wanting to know about how the task force plans to address issues in enforcement, data collection, and policy evaluation.

“We are extremely disappointed that we have not received a formal response from your office, as we requested that your agencies respond no later than January 15th, 2015,” reads [the Aug. 17 letter](http://www.warren.senate.gov/files/documents/2015-8-17_Letter_to_Interagency_Task_Force.pdf) to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burwell, and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel.

The senators now ask that the co-chairs answer the 11 questions in the December letter, which included how the administration will measure the rate of adoption of Guidance #213 guidelines among veterinarians, whether USDA voluntary surveys are effective at collecting valid on-farm antibiotic use data, and what changes FDA will expect to see if its guidance is successful in reducing the continuous low-dose use of antibiotics in food animal production.

“While we appreciate that your staff has engaged with our offices, our questions have yet to be answered, and there is no substitute for a formal response,” the senators wrote, asking that the questions be answered within 30 days.

The Interagency Task Force for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria was established by Executive Order 13676 [last September](http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2014/09/white-house-calls-for-action-plan-to-address-antibiotic-resistance/#.VFvc2_nF-So), along with the Presidential Advisory Council on Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria. The task force released the National Action Plan for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria [in late March](http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2015/03/critics-call-white-house-antibiotics-action-plan-a-missed-opportunity-on-farms/#.VdNPtLJViko).

Senators Warren, Feinstein and Gillibrand also requested in their letter that the advisory council include at least three experts on the link between antibiotic overuse and public health who don’t have a conflicting business interest.

The Department of Health and Human Services is currently reviewing nominations to fill 30 seats on the council, which is charged with supporting the implementation of President Obama’s executive order.

“[R]epresentatives from industrial animal producer associations and veterinary drug industry have publicly voiced doubts about the need to reduce antibiotic use in animals and about the impact that the FDA’s policies will have on the amount of drugs used,” the senators wrote, citing comments reported by PBS Frontline, **Food Safety News**and The Wall Street Journal.

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