

**Testimony of Carol Lobato
Before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives**

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Surviving Salmonella

Good morning Chairman Waxman, Chairman Stupak, and members of the Committee.

My name is Carol Lobato. I live in Littleton, Colorado. I am 77 years old and have been married to my husband Ed for 54 years. We are both retired and are blessed with four children and four grandchildren.

Thank you for inviting me to come to Washington to share my story. I hope that by doing so, together we will make our dinner tables, and our entire food system, safer for all of us.

My story began on the evening of July 10th, 2010, the night that Ed and I took our grandson Drew to dinner at The Fort Restaurant in Morrison, Colorado. The Fort is an upscale restaurant that serves wild game and other exotic dishes. The Fort hosted President Clinton and other world leaders at the Summit of the Eight dinner in the early 1990's.

One of the items we ordered that night was an appetizer of rattlesnake cakes. All of us tasted the dish, but I didn't particularly like it.

The next afternoon, I began to feel very sick. At first, I began to shake and experience chills. Then came the waves of vomiting and explosive diarrhea. My fever rose to 102 degrees.

Ed rushed me to the emergency room. There doctors administered several tests, including chest X-rays, a CT scan, and blood, stool and urine samples. They gave me IV hydration and sent me home several hours later, with instructions to return if the symptoms did not improve.

The next day, I went to see our family doctor. I was still experiencing diarrhea, stomach cramps, dizziness, and weakness. After reviewing my test results, the doctor informed me that I was experiencing a very serious condition called septic shock. He immediately admitted me to Swedish Hospital in Englewood.

The ride to the hospital was very unpleasant. I felt very sick. My electrolytes were depleted, and my potassium level was dangerously low. At the hospital, doctors placed

me on potassium, oxygen, and IV antibiotics. A few days later, the culture results came back positive for Salmonella bacteria in my bloodstream and intestine.

Since I take medication for rheumatoid arthritis, which compromises my immune system, I am particularly at risk for infectious bacteria like Salmonella. The infection wiped me out to the point that I could not function on my own or even get to the bathroom by myself.

I remained at the hospital for an agonizing four nights and five days, and was finally discharged home.

The Salmonella infection is not over for me. I have lost my stamina. I often experience indigestion and it is difficult for me to enjoy certain foods. I feel tired and require rest during the day. I lost eight pounds while being in the hospital (the only plus during this ordeal). My doctors have told me that I almost certainly would have died without aggressive intervention.

Ed and Drew were also ill, although their condition was not as serious as mine.

The CDC and Jefferson County Department of Health later determined that the rattlesnake cakes we consumed at The Fort were the source of our illnesses. Through a trace-back procedure, investigators found that the eggs used in the rattlesnake cake recipe had been produced at the Wright County Egg farm in Iowa. The Salmonella Enteritidis found in my cultures was an exact DNA match to the Salmonella Enteritidis found at the egg farm.

The CDC has recently published reports that at least 1500 others in our country have also suffered from an identical strain of Salmonella Enteritidis found in contaminated eggs produced by Wright County Egg and Hillandale Farms. The FDA has now inspected the farms and found several health violations. The published inspection reports show that inspectors found the following:

- Chicken manure piles 4 to 8 feet high in the hen houses
- Live wild birds (non-chickens) flying around in the hen houses
- Rodent burrows along the baseboards of the hen houses
- Liquid manure seeping through the concrete foundation
- Standing water in the chicken manure pits
- Loose chickens walking through manure piles to the egg laying areas
- 31 live mice observed inside the hen houses
- “Live and dead flies too numerous to count” inside the hen houses
- 65 unsealed rodent holes in the walls of the hen houses

These findings are shocking to me, not only as a consumer but because I also have some personal experience with chickens and eggs. You see, I actually grew up on an Iowa farm.

As one of 5 girls, I shared responsibility for doing the work and chores that went with living on a family farm. That included raising chickens from little chicks until they were ready for market, and tending to hens kept for egg production. Our farm never looked the way these two egg farms have been described. We never had any problems on our farm because we kept things clean, took proper care of our chickens, and did things the right way.

Three years ago, this country suffered a horrible salmonella outbreak linked to contaminated peanut butter that sickened over 700 people nationwide. Last year, our country was struck by another peanut butter salmonella outbreak that sickened another 700 people, tragically killing 9. Both times, survivors like me came before this Committee asking for help.

But this time I am the one asking you - on behalf of myself, my family and the 1500 others who were sickened - please make our food system safer. Pass legislation that provides more funding and more inspectors to keep these companies from cutting corners on safety. Pass legislation that requires more testing of products before they leave the factories. Pass legislation that rewards companies that do things right, and punishes those who refuse.

Because if you don't, we will be here again.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Carol Lobato
Littleton, Colorado