



October 10, 2024

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Via e-mail: agsec@usda.gov

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I'm writing regarding Pure Prairie Poultry, a Minnesota company that factory-farmed chickens and operated a slaughterhouse in Charles City, Iowa. **In 2022, your agency awarded over \$45 million to this company to expand its capacity to slaughter chickens.** In doing so, it propped up a company that [quickly failed](#) and has left over a million birds at risk of starving and dying particularly stressful and painful deaths in violation of anti-cruelty laws, as well as leaving families across the Midwest—some of whom have contacted PETA—without assistance as birds die and resort to cannibalism in their sheds.

Whistleblowers from within the company began contacting PETA on September 10, alleging that birds were being left for days without food or water on trucks parked at the slaughterhouse, which the company later [admitted](#) had happened. Additional insiders reported that the company's contract factory farms were running out of feed for millions of animals. We immediately alerted Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) leadership to each of these complaints. We offered to connect them with the eyewitnesses so they could investigate and end birds' illegal suffering, at least at the slaughterhouse. **FSIS never responded, as whistleblowers indicated that conditions further declined—something we urge you and/or the Office of Inspector General to investigate.**

Your agency's wanton waste of taxpayer money in propping up this private company to raise millions of chickens in massive sheds and kill them to produce an unhealthy product for human consumption is a textbook example of government waste and disregard for human health. In a time when factory farms have been implicated as integral to environmental destruction and when bird flu is running rampant, handing millions of dollars to this company is unconscionable, especially given your agency's mission to "nourish" Americans and preserve natural resources. Coupled with its toothless response to this crisis, this situation speaks, yet again, to rot deep within the agency. **Please stop throwing taxpayer money at bad actors like Pure Prairie Poultry and only award grants to businesses that don't harm animals, the environment, or humans.**

Thank you for your time and consideration. I can be reached at ColinH@peta.org.

Sincerely,

Colin Henstock
Associate Director of Project Strategy

cc: The Honorable Phyllis K. Fong, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Agriculture

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