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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

IN SUPPORT OF

*Rulemaking for The Maine Salmonella enteritidis ("SE") Risk Reduction and Surveillance
Program for Commercial Egg-Type Flocks*

March 6, 2024

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, I am Dr. Stefanie Bolas, State Veterinarian and Director of Maine's Animal Health Program. I am speaking on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry in support of *Rulemaking for the Maine Salmonella enteritidis ("SE") Risk Reduction and Surveillance Program for Commercial Egg-Type Flocks*.

Salmonella is a virulent and sometimes deadly pathogen. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that *Salmonella* is responsible for 1.35 million infections, 26,500 hospitalizations, and 420 deaths in the United States annually. *Salmonella enterica serotype Enteritidis (SE)* is estimated to be responsible for about half of all human *Salmonella* infections.

Maine began an SE reduction program in 1988, and in 2001, 7 M.R.S.A. §1758 established the Maine SE Risk Reduction and Surveillance Program in law. The statute directs the Commissioner to adopt major substantive rules to implement the program. When I began my tenure as State Veterinarian in Spring 2023, it was discovered that there wasn't a record of the Department conducting rulemaking when the program was established. So, while the Animal Health Program has engaged in SE reduction and monitoring activities for more than three decades, we propose these rules to bring the Department into compliance with the statute and establish important protocols and enforcement provisions.

Maine's largest egg producers already have SE monitoring programs because they fall under FDA jurisdiction. However, completing this rulemaking will ensure DACF can insist on best practices from all commercial egg producers with more than 3,000 hens. DACF will work with all impacted facilities to communicate the new rules and provide technical assistance to help them meet the requirements. Producers with less than 3,000 hens are not licensed or inspected by the department; however, we can work with these smaller farms to prevent *SE* in their flocks. The National Poultry Improvement Plan includes testing and monitoring for several important

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poultry diseases, and our Animal Health Program can guide producers on how to get their birds added so they can know the health status of their flock.

The Legislature has entrusted the Maine Animal Health Program with making and enforcing rules to ensure the health of livestock and humans. Establishing SE Risk Reduction and Surveillance Program rules will give us the tools to pursue this mission. We appreciate your consideration of the Department's proposal. I'm happy to answer questions now or at the work session.