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CONTACTS: Richard Lobb, NCC, (202) 296-2622 ext. 119  
Sherrie Rosenblatt, NTF, (202) 898-0100 ext. 7227

## ***Poultry Groups Urge Obama To Keep Food Inspectors On the Job***

WASHINGTON – April 7, 2011 – Poultry industry associations urged the Obama Administration Thursday to classify federal food inspectors as “essential” personnel to avoid any interruption in the supply of poultry meat to consumers nationwide in the event of a federal government shutdown.

“Withdrawal of inspection services would be completely unnecessary and could cause havoc for our industry and for our customers and consumers across the country and around the world,” said a letter from Joel Brandenberger, president of the National Turkey Federation, and Mike Brown, president of the National Chicken Council, to President Obama, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and key members of Congress.

Brandenberger and Brown pointed out that federal law requires the presence of federal inspectors in poultry and meat plants while fresh meat is being processed. All meat and poultry products in the United States are federally inspected before being shipped to consumers. In past shutdowns, federal meat and poultry inspectors have been recognized as “essential” federal employees due to their role in protecting public health and safety.

“If USDA inspection is withdrawn, poultry plants across the country will not be able to operate,” they wrote. They said the impacts could include:

- Animals in transit to processing could be held on trucks, unable to be offloaded because the plant is not able to accept them for processing, with serious harm to animal welfare.
- Fresh poultry, a highly perishable type of product, could not be shipped from the plants for lack of the mark of inspection.
- Product at ports awaiting shipment to foreign customers would back up for lack of federal export permits, depriving our nation of valuable foreign trade.
- Consumers who rely on poultry as a major part of their diet could see a disruption to supply and possibly significantly higher prices if the disruption goes on for any length of time.
- The trade in live animals would be disrupted, and many thousands of poultry workers would have to be furloughed, until the plants can return to normal operation.

“We urge you to avoid these consequences by recognizing that federal meat and poultry inspectors are essential workers in the event of a shutdown,” they wrote. “This is not a partisan issue but one of public health and safety.”

The National Chicken Council represents integrated chicken producer-processors, the companies that produce and process chickens. Member companies of NCC account for more than 95 percent of the chicken sold in the United States.

The National Turkey Federation is the advocate for all segments of the U.S. turkey industry, providing services and conducting activities, which increase demand for its members' products and protect and enhance the ability to effectively and profitably provide wholesome, high quality, nutritious turkey products.