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Contact: Meghan Dubyak/Allison Preiss

202-224-3978

**AT SENATE HEARING, Sen. Brown Presses FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION CHIEF Over Tainted Chicken Jerky PET TREATS**

***Tainted Chicken Jerky Treats Are Still on the Shelves of Many Retailers Despite Numerous Reports of Sickened Pets***

WASHINGTON, D.C.— At a Senate Appropriations hearing today, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) pressed the head of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Dr. Margaret Hamburg, over tainted pet treats. Following an increase in tainted pet treats from China connected to animal deaths and illnesses, Brown has repeatedly urged the FDA to take quick action to protect consumers and pet owners. He has sent letters to the FDA urging the agency to promptly pursue efforts to find the contaminant in these pet treats and ensure that they are pulled from store shelves and to explain its current procedures for notifying consumers and retailers of pet food safety breaches. At today’s hearing, Brown urged Dr. Hamburg and the FDA to be more aggressive on pet treat safety, and to continue all efforts to find the root cause of the contaminant.

“While I am encouraged that the FDA has begun inspections at the Chinese plants that manufacture chicken jerky dog treats, I remain concerned about the numerous pet owners that could still be buying these treats, unaware of the possible contamination, and feeding the treats to their beloved dogs,” Brown said. “The FDA must be as aggressive as possible to find the source of this contamination, which has already led to illness and death among an untold number of pets in Ohio and across our country.”

At a recent news conference at the Cleveland Animal Protective League, Brown was joined by Kevin Thaxton, whose 10 year-old pug, Chancey, passed away unexpectedly after eating chicken jerky pet treats. After Mr. Thaxton’s new five-month old puppy, Penny suffered life-threatening kidney failure after eating the same treats, the Thaxton’s saw an FDA warning connecting the illnesses between the two dogs: tainted chicken jerky pet treats imported from China. Brown was also joined at the Cleveland Animal Protective League by veterinarian Dr. Brian Forsgren, and Karen Minton, the Humane Society of the United States’ Ohio state director, to call on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to step up its investigation of pet food and treats, particularly those imported from countries like China, where the potential for contamination is high. A Brooklyn Heights woman, Terry Safranek, lost her 9-year-old fox terrier, Samson, in late January. Only after seeing a story on the evening news did she realize that her dog’s death was likely due to his consumption of the same tainted chicken jerky treats.

Brown has been a strong advocate in the Senate for food safety, and was instrumental in passing the *Food and Drug Administration* (FDA) *Food Safety Modernization Act of 2010*. As a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, he passed legislation to give the FDA new authority to recall dangerous foods, improve the safety of imported products, and establish a comprehensive traceability system to quickly and accurately trace the source of tainted food in the event of a food-borne illness outbreak.

In recent years, tainted imports from China and other countries have led to the recall of hundreds of thousands of toys, tires, food products, and pet food products, and Brown has fought to ensure the safety of these products. In 2007, Brown requested that Ashland University professor test Halloween and holiday items purchased in Ohio for levels of lead. Many of those items were made in China—and approximately one in every seven items was found to contain high lead levels. According to guidelines set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) at the time, acceptable levels of lead were 600 parts per million (ppm), or 99.97 percent lead-free. Items like a witch candy bucket tested at 88,900 ppm; a treat basket with pumpkin ornament tested at 87,800 ppm, and fake “ugly” teeth tested at 65,200 ppm. All were recalled.

In 2011, following the implementation of strong consumer product standards, Brown requested that Dr. Weidenhamer conduct a second round of testing. Dr. Weidenhamer tested a total of 75 Halloween items purchased in Ohio from eleven different retailers, and no lead levels of concern were detected in these products. The progress follows major reform, passed in 2008, of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).  The *Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008* (CPSIA), cosponsored by Brown, set acceptable levels of lead at 600 parts per million (ppm) within 180 days of enactment, 300 ppm within 180 days of enactment, and 100 ppm within three years of enactment, unless the 100 ppm level was found to be “not technologically feasible.” Following Brown’s call for action and amidst numerous reports of tainted items, the CPSC voted in July 2011 to ensure that toys for children 12 and under meet the 100 ppm level, or are at least 99.99 percent lead-free.

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