

# Chicago Tribune

## Whale meat, shark fins, pink slime, antibiotic rules and a big gestation crate pledge in a food policy roundup

The food policy news just keeps sliding in like so much pink slime. Here's a fresh-ish batch of it:

**SHARK FINS:** Yesterday the Illinois House passed a bill to ban the sale, trade and distribution of shark fins, that are sometimes used in Chinese delicacies like shark fins soup.

If passed Illinois would join California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington, which have adopted similar bans. House Bill 4119, sponsored by Rep. [Sara Feigenholtz](#), D-Chicago, passed the House with an 81-33 vote and now moves to the State Senate for consideration.

"I'm pleased that the State of Illinois is working to take part in the worldwide movement to protect these important creatures," said Rep. Feigenholtz in a statement. "The decisive vote by the House reflects the urgency of the need for shark conservation."

**WHALE AND DOLPHIN MEAT** are not longer just a click away on Amazon.com this week after the company responded to a Change.org petition launched by Melissa Sehgal to stop selling it in [Japan](#).

"I am so thankful for the inspiration and support of compassionate people around the world who took part in my [campaign on Change.org](#). When the Environmental Investigation Agency and Humane Society International released their report about Amazon.com selling whale and dolphin meat, I was horrified, but not surprised," Sehgal said in a statement. "I have witnessed killers give Japan a bad name by driving these animals into a shallow cove in Taiji and slaughtering these intelligent, sensitive beings for unhealthy meat products."

According to Change.org petition the campaign gathered more than 200,000 supporters and resulted in Amazon adding to its prohibited list “parts or products from whale or dolphin.”

**PINK SLIME** is back in the news after this term for rendered beef scraps and connective tissue made its debut three years ago in a [New York Times article](#). The controversial rendered meat sludge that can be full of pathogens until it is treated with ammonia hydroxide, was dropped from fast food chains in recent years but is still purchased by the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) for institutional feeding programs including school meals.

This has prompted yet another [Change.org petition this week](#), this time by a Bettina Siegal to urge the USDA to stop using the product in school meals. So far it is gathered nearly 15,500 supporters.

“The federal government continues to allow pink slime in school food,” said Siegal in a statement from Change.org, “and they have just authorized the purchase of an additional 7 million pounds of the substance for consumption by our nation's children, putting them at possible risk for food borne illness.”

**ANTIBIOTIC FIGHT:** Today is the last day to submit comments to the [Food and Drug Administration](#) on its proposed rule to restrict the use of one class of humanly important antibiotics, called cephalosporin, in animal production. Supporters of the rule feel it want to see it passed but feel it does not go far enough to address the problem of bugs that have grown resistant to antibiotics through routine feeding to livestock.

In an ongoing effort to raise more concerns about antibiotics in animal production, Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (D-NY) introduced a panel of speakers at a briefing on the subject. They included Lance Price of The Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen) who [published a study](#) last month that links the routine use of antibiotics in food-animal production to deadly, antibiotic-resistant **MRSA** that can infect humans.

**ANTI-GESTATION CRATE** pledges just keep trotting in. This week the Compass Group, the world's largest food service company, joined [McDonald's](#), Hormel and others in pledging to stop buying from suppliers who use gestation crates (cages for pregnant sows that are too small for them to turn around) in the production of their pork by 2017.

**LISTERIA IN CANTALOUPE:** Families of those who died from eating cantaloupe tainted with listeria last year issued a press release this week asking why they will not allowed be allowed to attend meetings between industry and regulators how to address the problem.

“If the full weight of our losses is not recognized by those in industry, how can they make fully informed decisions regarding the importance of improved practices?” asked Kathleen Gilbert Buchanan, whose mother, Frances Gilbert, died in September from a Listeria infection, as part of a released statement. “Treating all of the illnesses and deaths as mere statistics will not have the same impact as hearing the voices of our families and seeing the faces of our loved ones.”