

1 **Antibiotic resistance is lower in *Staphylococcus aureus* isolated from antibiotic-free raw**
2 **meat as compared to conventional raw meat**

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4 **Short title: *Staph aureus* from antibiotic-free meat is more susceptible to antibiotics**

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21 **Keywords**

22 *Staphylococcus aureus*; MRSA; Antibiotic resistance; Antibiotic abuse; Food microbiology;
23 Livestock

24 **Abstract**

25 The frequent use of antibiotics contributes to antibiotic resistance in bacteria, resulting in an
26 increase in infections that are difficult to treat. Livestock are commonly administered antibiotics
27 in their feed, but there is current interest in raising animals that are only administered antibiotics
28 during active infections. *Staphylococcus aureus* (SA) is a common pathogen of both humans
29 and livestock raised for human consumption. SA has achieved high levels of antibiotic
30 resistance, but the origins and locations of resistance selection are poorly understood. We
31 determined the prevalence of SA and MRSA in conventional and antibiotic-free (AF) meat
32 products, and also measured rates of antibiotic resistance in these isolates. We isolated SA from
33 raw conventional turkey, chicken, beef, and pork samples and also from AF chicken and turkey
34 samples. We found that SA contamination was common, with an overall prevalence of 22.64%
35 (range of 2.78-30.77%) in conventional meats and 13.0% (range of 12.5-13.2%) in AF poultry
36 meats. MRSA was isolated from 15.72% of conventional raw meats (range of 2.78-20.41%) but
37 not from AF-free meats. The degree of antibiotic resistance in conventional poultry products
38 was significantly higher vs AF poultry products for a number of different antibiotics, and while
39 multi-drug resistant strains were relatively common in conventional meats none were detected in
40 AF meats. The use of antibiotics in livestock contributes to high levels of antibiotic resistance in
41 SA found in meat products. Our results support the use of AF conditions for livestock in order to
42 prevent antibiotic resistance development in SA.

43

44 **Introduction**

45 The discovery of antibiotics has saved countless lives as they have been used to treat
46 bacterial infections. However, bacteria can quickly develop resistance to antibiotics through
47 mutation and by horizontal gene transfer [1]. Many bacterial species have acquired resistance to
48 a number of antibiotics and the rate of development of new antibiotics is not keeping pace with
49 the development of resistance. High rates of antibiotic use by humans, by livestock animals, and
50 also the release of antibiotics into the environment continue to select for resistant hosts [2]. As a
51 result, many bacterial infections are difficult to treat and future prospects are not promising that
52 the trend will reverse.

53 Livestock animals are commonly raised in high density environments; thus infectious
54 agents rapidly move through animals resulting in significant morbidity/mortality. These animals
55 are commonly administered antibiotics prophylactically to prevent bacterial infections.
56 Prophylactic use of antibiotics results in better animal survival, and also in higher meat yields.
57 This practice is widespread around the world, and current estimates suggest that 80% of all
58 antibiotics are administered to livestock [3]. This high rate of antibiotic use can result in the
59 development of antibiotic resistance in livestock-associated bacterial species. Since many
60 bacteria that infect livestock also infect humans (e.g., *E. coli*, *S. aureus*, *Salmonella*), the areas
61 where livestock are raised are thought to be a breeding ground for antibiotic resistance [4].

62 *Staphylococcus aureus* (SA) is an opportunistic bacterial pathogen carried
63 asymptotically by healthy individuals; it is found consistently in 20% and intermittently in
64 60% of the human population [5]. SA can carry a number of virulence genes, including
65 hemolysins, enterotoxins, and immune-modulatory factors [6, 7]. SA can cause a variety of

66 human diseases including skin infections, sepsis, and pneumonia [7-9]. It is also likely the most
67 common cause of food poisoning in the United States [10].

68 Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a group of SA strains that has
69 become resistant to many common antibiotics (methicillin-susceptible strains referred to as
70 MSSA). SA and MRSA have become an increasing problem in healthcare in the United States,
71 where they cause an estimated 80-100,000 invasive infections and 11-19,000 deaths per [11, 12].
72 In the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded that during the year 2012,
73 the number of MRSA-infected patients admitted into the hospital was estimated to be just above
74 75,000 [13]. The most common mode of SA/MRSA transmission is person-to person contact,
75 and transmission usually takes place either in hospitals or the community [14-20]. However,
76 some individuals become infected with SA/MRSA through live animal contact, and others
77 through contact with raw livestock meat [16-20]. These bacteria can experience horizontal gene
78 transfer by mobile genetic elements that confer antibiotic resistance, which is thought to be the
79 cause of the emergence of resistant bacteria found in farms and farm workers [21]. There is a
80 link between voluntary removal of antibiotics from large-scale farms and a significant reduction
81 in rates of antibiotic resistance among *Enterococcus* isolates from those farms [22]. These data
82 suggest that antibiotic resistance in livestock can be reversible.

83 The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of SA and MRSA in raw beef,
84 chicken, pork, and turkey meats from conventionally-raised animals, and also from chicken and
85 turkey meats from antibiotic-free (AF) raised animals, and to characterize individual antibiotic
86 resistance profiles of the isolates. Data obtained were then analyzed to determine correlations of
87 meat types and levels of antibiotic resistance to see if there were differences in rates of antibiotic
88 resistance in SA isolated from meats of a particular species. We also determined if there were

89 differences in rates of antibiotic resistance in meats from animals raised with or without
90 prophylactic antibiotic use.

91

92 **Materials and Methods**

93 **Isolation and Identification of SA/MRSA in meat samples**

94 Conventional meat samples were collected from at least 11 different grocery stores/wholesale
95 stores/ethnic markets (see Table 2), which were obtained as packaged meats at grocery and
96 wholesale stores and unpackaged meats from ethnic markets. AF meat samples were collected
97 from 5 different stores, representing 6 different brands (see Table 3), all as packaged meats.
98 Samples were tested for SA by swabbing meat with a sterile swab or pipetting 10 μ l of meat juice
99 directly onto Mannitol Salt Agar (MSA) plates. MSA plates that showed no growth were scored
100 as negative for SA. Growth on MSA plates, accompanied by fermentation, initially indicated SA
101 detection. Gram stains were performed to confirm the presence of gram-positive cocci, and all
102 isolates were also catalase and coagulase positive. Genotyping was performed by PCR to detect
103 the presence of Staphylococcus-specific 16S rDNA sequences, and *nucA* detection was used to
104 confirm *S. aureus* [23]. MRSA was detected by the same procedure in the presence of 2 μ g/mL
105 oxacillin. To confirm MRSA detection, PCR was used to detect *mecA* [23]; products were
106 separated on a 1.5% agarose gel.

107 **Disk Diffusion Test**

108 The disk diffusion test was used to classify the resistance of each isolate to antibiotics. We used a
109 standard protocol [24] and used ATCC *S. aureus* reference strain 25923 as a control; if that strain
110 failed to show established resistance values then the test was repeated. Mueller-Hinton agar
111 plates were used for growth, supplemented with 2% NaCl. McFarland standards were used to
112 verify that bacterial density was in the appropriate range. Amounts of antibiotic per disk were as

113 follows: clindamycin 2 µg, cefotaxime 30 µg, gentamicin 10 µg, erythromycin 15 µg,
114 tetracycline 30 µg, ciprofloxacin 5 µg, chloramphenicol 30 µg, and rifampin 5 µg (Sigma
115 Aldrich). Susceptibility of isolates were identified by zone diameters as determined by CLSI
116 standards. Plates were incubated at 37°C for 24-48 hours.

117 **Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC)**

118 MIC tests were performed for vancomycin at concentrations of 6 µg/mL (intermediate
119 resistance) and 16 µg/mL (complete resistance). Mueller-Hinton agar plates were prepared with
120 vancomycin, then inoculated with isolates and analyzed for growth after 24-48 hours at 37°C.
121 MRSA was detected by the same procedure in the presence of 4 µg/mL oxacillin. Plates were
122 observed to see if growth occurred; if only a few colonies were detected, then samples were re-
123 tested. Presence of just a few colonies was not scored as resistant.

124 **Statistical analysis**

125 To analyze the prevalence of SA, MSSA, or MRSA in different types of raw meat samples, a
126 chi-squared test was performed. A two sample t-test with unequal variance was used to
127 determine if the sum of all meat isolates was more or less resistant/susceptible to a certain
128 antibiotic. For all antibiotics tested with zone diameter measurements, t-tests were performed,
129 while a 2-sample z-test of proportions was performed on oxacillin and vancomycin and also for
130 differences in the prevalence of MDR strains. Multi-drug comparison was performed by an
131 asymptotic chi-square test. A Fishers Exact test was used to examine differences in rates of
132 antibiotic resistance to oxacillin and vancomycin.

133 Results

134 Detection and isolation of SA in conventional raw meat samples

135 159 different conventional meat samples (beef, chicken, pork and turkey) were tested for
136 SA, as described in Materials and Methods. 1 of 36 beef samples was positive (2.78%), 14 of 49
137 chicken samples were positive (28.57%), 12 of 39 pork samples were positive (30.77%), and 9 of
138 35 turkey samples were positive (25.71%). SA contamination in beef was significantly lower
139 than all other meat types ($p < 0.001$; chi-squared test), but there were no other significant
140 differences in prevalence. The overall frequency of SA isolation from the 159 samples was 36
141 (22.64%; see Table 1). The meat samples were collected from at least 11 different stores, as
142 summarized in Table 2. Information on the store of origin was not available for all 36 isolates,
143 but the origin is reported for 20 of the 36 isolates (55.6%).

144 **Table 1: Prevalence of *Staphylococcus aureus* in Raw Meat Samples**

Meat type	Number of samples tested	Number of SA isolated	% with SA	Number of MSSA isolated	% with MSSA	Number of MRSA isolated	% with MRSA
C Beef	36	1	2.78%	0	0.00%	1	2.78%
C Chicken	49	14	28.57%	4	8.16%	10	20.41%
C Pork	39	12	30.77%	5	12.82%	7	17.95%
C Turkey	35	9	25.71%	2	5.71%	7	20.00%
C Total	159	36	22.64%	11	6.92%	25	15.72%
AF Chicken	53	7	13.21%	7	13.21%	0	0%
AF Turkey	24	3	12.50%	3	12.50%	0	0%
AF Total	77	10	13.00%	10	13.00%	0	0%

145 Prevalence of *Staphylococcus aureus* (SA) in raw meat samples, which is further divided into
146 Methicillin-Susceptible *Staphylococcus aureus* (MSSA) and Methicillin-Resistant
147 *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). C=Conventional meat sample (raised with antibiotics) and
148 AF=Antibiotic-free meat sample.

149 **Table 2: Origin of *Staphylococcus aureus* Isolates (Conventional Meats) by Store Location**

Store	Beef MRSA	Chicken MSSA	Chicken MRSA	Pork MSSA	Pork MRSA	Turkey MSSA	Turkey MRSA	Total
Grocery store A			1					1
Grocery store B		1						1
Grocery store C		1	1					2
Grocery store D			1					1
Grocery store E				2	1	2	1	6
Grocery Store F					1			1
Wholesale store A			1				1	2
Wholesale store B			2	1				3
Small ethnic market A			1					1
Small ethnic market B					1			1
Small ethnic market C				1				1
Unknown origin*	1	2	3	1	4		5	16
Total	1	4	10	5	7	2	7	36

150 Store locations and specific isolates per store are listed to show that SA isolates were collected
 151 from diverse locations. *Some meat samples were provided without any information on the
 152 store of origin.

153 **Screening of SA isolates from conventional meats for MRSA**

154 SA isolates were re-plated on MSA plates in the presence of 2 µg/ml oxacillin to
 155 determine resistance to oxacillin. Any isolates found to be resistant to oxacillin were initially
 156 classified as MRSA, and all others were determined to be MSSA. To confirm MRSA, PCR
 157 genotyping was performed (data not shown) to detect the *mecA* gene; all isolates reported as
 158 MRSA produced a band of ~533bp (see Methods). MRSA was detected only rarely in beef (1 of
 159 36 meat samples positive; 2.78%), but was common in the other three meat types: 10 of 49 meat
 160 samples positive in chicken (20.41%), 7 of 39 meat samples positive in pork (17.95%), and 7 of
 161 35 meat samples positive in turkey (20.00%). The overall frequency of MRSA isolation from

162 the 159 samples was 15.72% (Table 1), consistent with reports by others in different locations
163 [25]. Of samples where SA was detected, 100% were MRSA in beef (but n=1), 77.78% were
164 MRSA in turkey, 71.43% were MRSA in chicken, and 58.33% were MRSA in pork. Overall,
165 the majority of SA isolates were MRSA (69.44%). Beef had significantly fewer MSSA ($p \leq 0.05$)
166 and MRSA ($p \leq 0.02$) contamination as compared to other meat types, but there were no other
167 significant differences by meat type.

168 **Antibiotic resistance in conventional raw meat SA isolates**

169 We next measured antibiotic resistance in all MSSA and MRSA isolates. Resistance
170 levels were determined by disk diffusion for eight common antibiotics. Supplemental Table 1
171 shows disk diffusion distances for each isolate, with zone diameters (in millimeters) for all
172 antibiotics except for oxacillin and vancomycin. Relative antibiotic resistance (complete
173 resistance, intermediate resistance, and complete susceptibility) is also indicated for each isolate.
174 We detected two isolates with intermediate resistance to vancomycin, one of which was also a
175 MRSA strain. Mean disk diffusion distances are shown in Figure 1 to better illustrate relative
176 differences by meat type and by antibiotic. Of note, the frequency of isolates that were multi-
177 drug resistant (MDR; complete resistance to three or more antibiotics) per meat group were
178 found to be: 100% (beef; but n=1), 66.7% (chicken), 55.5% (turkey), and 54.5% (pork); the
179 overall frequency of multi-drug resistance was 20/33 or 60.6%. No significant differences in
180 multi-drug resistance were found by meat type; beef was excluded due to the small sample size.
181 Complete susceptibility to all antibiotics tested was not detected in any isolate.

182 We then determined if there were any significant differences in rates of antibiotic
183 resistance when comparing meat types. The only significant result was that pork SA isolates
184 were significantly more susceptible to cefotaxime as compared to other SA isolates ($p=0.03$ for

185 susceptibility, or $p=0.97$ for resistance). We compared rates of antibiotic resistance amongst all
186 SA samples to determine if SA from raw meat samples showed significant differences in
187 antibiotic susceptibility across the 10 antibiotics tested (Fig. 1). Clindamycin resistance was
188 significantly higher than rifampin ($p=0.005$); tetracycline resistance was significantly higher than
189 rifampin ($p<0.001$) and ciprofloxacin ($p=0.003$); cefotaxime resistance was significantly higher
190 than rifampin ($p<0.001$) and ciprofloxacin ($p=0.011$); erythromycin resistance was significantly
191 higher than all other antibiotics ($p\leq 0.05$); chloramphenicol resistance was significantly higher
192 than rifampin ($p<0.001$) and ciprofloxacin ($p=0.002$); gentamicin resistance was significantly
193 higher than rifampin ($p<0.001$) and ciprofloxacin ($p=0.035$); and ciprofloxacin resistance was
194 significantly higher than rifampin ($p=0.001$).

195 **Detection and isolation of SA and MRSA in AF raw poultry samples**

196 Raw meat samples were tested for the presence of SA using the same methods outlined
197 above, but using raw meat samples marked as “antibiotic-free”. In total, 77 different raw poultry
198 meat samples (chicken and turkey) were tested. AF meat sources are shown in Table 3. 7 of 53
199 chicken samples were positive for SA (13.2%) and 3 of 24 turkey samples were positive (12.5%)
200 for SA. SA was found at significantly higher levels in conventional meats as compared to AF
201 meats for chicken ($p=0.03$), but not for turkey ($p=0.11$). Isolates were genotyped as above to
202 confirm SA and MRSA. None of the 10 isolates from AF poultry meats were positive for the
203 *mecA* gene, indicating a lack of MRSA amongst all AF poultry isolates. These results were
204 further confirmed by a lack of growth on MSA plates with 2 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ oxacillin. MRSA was found
205 at significantly higher levels in conventional meats as compared to AF meats for both chicken
206 ($p=0.0004$) and turkey ($p=0.0002$).

207

208 **Table 3: Origin of *Staphylococcus aureus* Isolates (Antibiotic-free meats) by Store Location**

209

210	Store	Chicken MSSA	Chicken MRSA	Turkey MSSA	Turkey MRSA	Total
	Grocery store A, Brand 1	2	0	2	0	4
211	Grocery store B, Brand 1	5	0	1	0	6
	Grocery store C, Brand 1	0	0	0	0	0
	Grocery store D, Brand 1	0	0	0	0	0
212	Grocery store E, Brand 1	0	0	0	0	0
	Grocery store E, Brand 2	0	0	0	0	0
213	Total	7	0	3	0	0

214 Store locations and specific isolates per store are listed to show that SA isolates were collected
215 from diverse locations.

216

217 **Antibiotic resistance in AF poultry SA isolates**

218 We next measured antibiotic resistance in all SA isolates from AF meats, as above for
219 conventional meat SA isolates. Supplemental Table 2 shows disk diffusion distances for each
220 isolate, with zone diameters (in millimeters) for all antibiotics except for oxacillin and
221 vancomycin; relative rates of antibiotic resistance are also indicated for each isolate. Mean disk
222 diffusion distances are shown in Figure 2. We did not detect any MDR isolates in the AF meat
223 samples. Complete susceptibility to all antibiotics tested was detected in one chicken SA isolate.
224 All AF SA isolates were susceptible to chloramphenicol, oxacillin, and vancomycin.

225 Statistical analysis was then performed to determine if there were any significant
226 differences in antibiotic resistance when comparing AF poultry meat types. Most antibiotic
227 resistances were not significantly different when comparing SA from chicken or turkey, with the
228 exception being that SA from chicken was significantly more resistant to ciprofloxacin

229 (p=0.005). Chicken isolates approached significantly higher resistance to cefotaxime (p=0.07),
230 and turkey isolates approached significantly higher resistance to erythromycin (p=0.07); a larger
231 sample size for AF turkey isolates might yield significant results for those groups.

232 Statistical analysis was also performed to determine if there were any significant
233 differences in antibiotic resistance when comparing conventional to AF meat sources (Figure 3).
234 We found significantly lower rates of resistance ($p \leq 0.05$) to the following antibiotics in AF
235 chicken products: clindamycin, cefotaxime, erythromycin, chloramphenicol, and oxacillin (Fig.
236 3A). In addition, there was a highly significant difference (p=0.0003) in MDR strains, with none
237 detected in AF chicken meat products. We found significantly lower rates of resistance ($p \leq 0.05$)
238 to the following antibiotics in AF turkey products: cefotaxime, chloramphenicol, ciprofloxacin,
239 and oxacillin (Fig. 3B). There was a significant difference (p=0.0067) in MDR strains, with
240 none detected in AF turkey meat products.

241

242 **Discussion**

243 We isolated 36 *Staphylococcus aureus* (SA) strains from conventional raw meat products
244 and 10 SA strains from AF meat products. SA was common in conventional raw meat products,
245 with a combined prevalence of 22.6% amongst the four meat types. Beef contamination was
246 significantly lower than other meat types, but no significant differences were seen between non-
247 beef frequencies. MRSA isolates were also common in conventional meat products, with an
248 overall prevalence of 15.7%, but there were no significant differences in either MRSA or MSSA
249 detection with the exception that beef had significantly lower contamination with both types. SA
250 contamination of AF poultry meats was significantly lower than in conventional meats (13.0% vs
251 22.6%; $p=0.02$), and no MRSA was detected in the 77 AF poultry samples (0%; $p<0.001$). We
252 also determined the antibiotic resistance profiles of each isolate for ten common antibiotics.
253 Antibiotic resistance in SA was very common amongst conventional meat isolates, but less
254 common in AF meat isolates. 20 conventional meat isolates showed resistance to at least three
255 different antibiotics (60.6% of the isolates); while no isolates were multi-drug resistant in the AF
256 group.

257 The prevalence of SA detected in our conventional meat samples was remarkably
258 consistent amongst chicken, pork and turkey (range of 25.71-30.77%). We detected more
259 MRSA than MSSA in raw meat samples (Table 1), and that trend held true across all meat types.
260 Our MRSA detection was higher than reported in other areas of the USA, especially for MRSA
261 in poultry, but were lower than those reported for pork in Canada [26]. Our AF meats had a
262 significantly lower SA prevalence than for conventional meats. The reasons for this finding are
263 not clear, but since SA has high rates of antibiotic resistance it is possible that this species can

264 outcompete other species when antibiotics are present, but when they are not it is outcompeted
265 by other bacteria due to higher fitness in other areas.

266 It is possible that contamination of meat products at central processing locations could
267 explain our results. Our isolates were obtained from at least 11 different stores, and the
268 antibiotic resistance profiles shown provide evidence that we did not re-isolate the same strains
269 repeatedly because the drug resistance patterns amongst the various isolates match only rarely
270 (Suppl. Tables 1 and 2). Taken together, this analysis indicates that many independent SA
271 strains were isolated during these studies, suggesting that a common source of SA contamination
272 at a processing plant is less likely to have affected our results. This further supports the
273 hypothesis that SA and MRSA isolates obtained from raw consumer meats include a variety of
274 SA strains with different resistance profiles, which could contribute to eventual increased
275 resistance in strains that could become a concern to consumers due to potential mobile genetic
276 elements.

277 The United States Food and Drug Administration releases results of the total amounts of
278 antibiotics sold for use in food-producing animals, and the 2014 report showed an increase of
279 22% in sales from 2009 to 2014. Tetracycline accounted for 70% of sales, followed by penicillin
280 (9%), macrolides (7%), and sulfas (5%) with no other drugs over 3% [27]. We have shown that
281 tetracycline resistance is significantly higher in SA isolates from conventional meats than that
282 seen for rifampin or ciprofloxacin, but not for other the antibiotics tested (Figure 1), although
283 there was no significant difference. High levels of antibiotic usage in livestock can also be seen
284 on a worldwide scale; in 2014 it was estimated that 38.5 million kilograms of antibiotics were
285 used exclusively in swine and poultry in China [28] and it is estimated that worldwide antibiotic
286 usage will increase 67% from 2010 to 2030 due to growing demand for meat [29].

287 A handful of studies have analyzed the frequency of SA and MRSA in meats produced
288 from animals raised under AF conditions. A study of AF vs conventional chicken products in
289 Oklahoma, USA found a lower prevalence of SA contamination in AF meats vs. conventional
290 meats (41% vs 53.8%) but the difference was not significant. MRSA contamination was very
291 low in both types of chicken [30]. SA was somewhat less common in AF pork (56.8%) as
292 compared to conventional pork (67.3%), although the difference was not significant. MRSA
293 frequency in raw pork was very similar in conventional pork (6.3%) and AF pork (7.4%) [31].
294 *E. coli* antibiotic resistance in organic vs conventionally-raised pigs in four European countries
295 was found to be lower for a number of different antibiotics tested [32], and analysis of
296 antimicrobial resistance genes across the microbiome of AF vs conventional chickens found that
297 AF animals also had lower levels of antibiotic resistance genes in their associated bacteria [33].
298 These results indicate that the lower rates of antibiotic resistance in AF animals likely apply to
299 other bacterial species and not just for SA. A poultry farm in the USA transitioned from
300 common antibiotic use to organic practices, and two *Enterococcus* species were analyzed for
301 antibiotic resistance before and after the transition. Interestingly, antibiotic resistance levels
302 significantly decreased following the transition [22].

303

304 **Conclusions**

305 In conclusion, we have found that the use of antibiotics in livestock contributes to high
306 levels of antibiotic resistance in SA isolates found in their resulting meat products. Our results
307 suggest that the use of antibiotics in livestock promotes higher rates of antibiotic resistance in
308 bacteria found in the meat products that consumers come into contact with and could be a source
309 of transmission of antibiotic resistance bacteria to humans. AF conditions for livestock may

- 310 prevent antibiotic resistance development in SA and in other microbes, and could relieve the
- 311 continued development of antibiotic resistance.

312 **List of Abbreviations**

313 SA: *Staphylococcus aureus*; MSSA: Methicillin-susceptible *Staphylococcus aureus*; MRSA:
314 Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*; LA: livestock-associated.

315

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318 collecting meat samples.

319

320 **Figure Legends**

321

322 **Figure 1: Mean antibiotic resistance in conventional raw meat SA isolates for eight** 323 **common antibiotics.**

324 Disk diffusion tests were performed to determine the amount of antibiotic required to prevent
325 growth of the various SA raw meat isolates. There was only a single SA isolate from beef, and
326 thus no results are reported here for that meat type. Means were calculated and standard error is
327 indicated. Antibiotic concentrations used and significance of zone diameters are detailed in
328 Methods. A two sample t-test with unequal variance test was used to determine if there were
329 significant differences in rates of antibiotic resistance or susceptibility amongst the various meat
330 types.

331

332 **Figure 2: Mean antibiotic resistance in AF raw poultry SA isolates for eight common** 333 **antibiotics.**

334 Disk diffusion tests were performed to determine the amount of antibiotic required to prevent
335 growth of the various SA raw meat isolates. A two sample t-test with unequal variance test was
336 used to determine if there were significant differences in rates of antibiotic resistance or
337 susceptibility amongst the various meat types. * indicates $p \leq 0.05$.

338

339 **Figure 3: Antibiotic resistance levels in AF meat products as compared to conventional** 340 **meat products.** Panel A shows differences in antibiotic resistance in SA isolated from AF

341 chicken products (n=7) as compared to conventional chicken products (n=12) and panel B shows
342 differences in rates of antibiotic resistance in SA isolated from AF turkey products (n=3) as

343 compared to conventional turkey products (n=9). A 2-sample z-test on proportions was used to
344 determine if there were significant differences in rates of antibiotic resistance amongst the
345 various meat types for all antibiotics tested by disk diffusion. A Fishers Exact test was used to
346 examine significant differences in oxacillin and vancomycin resistance. * indicates $p \leq 0.05$; **
347 indicates $p \leq 0.01$.
348

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353

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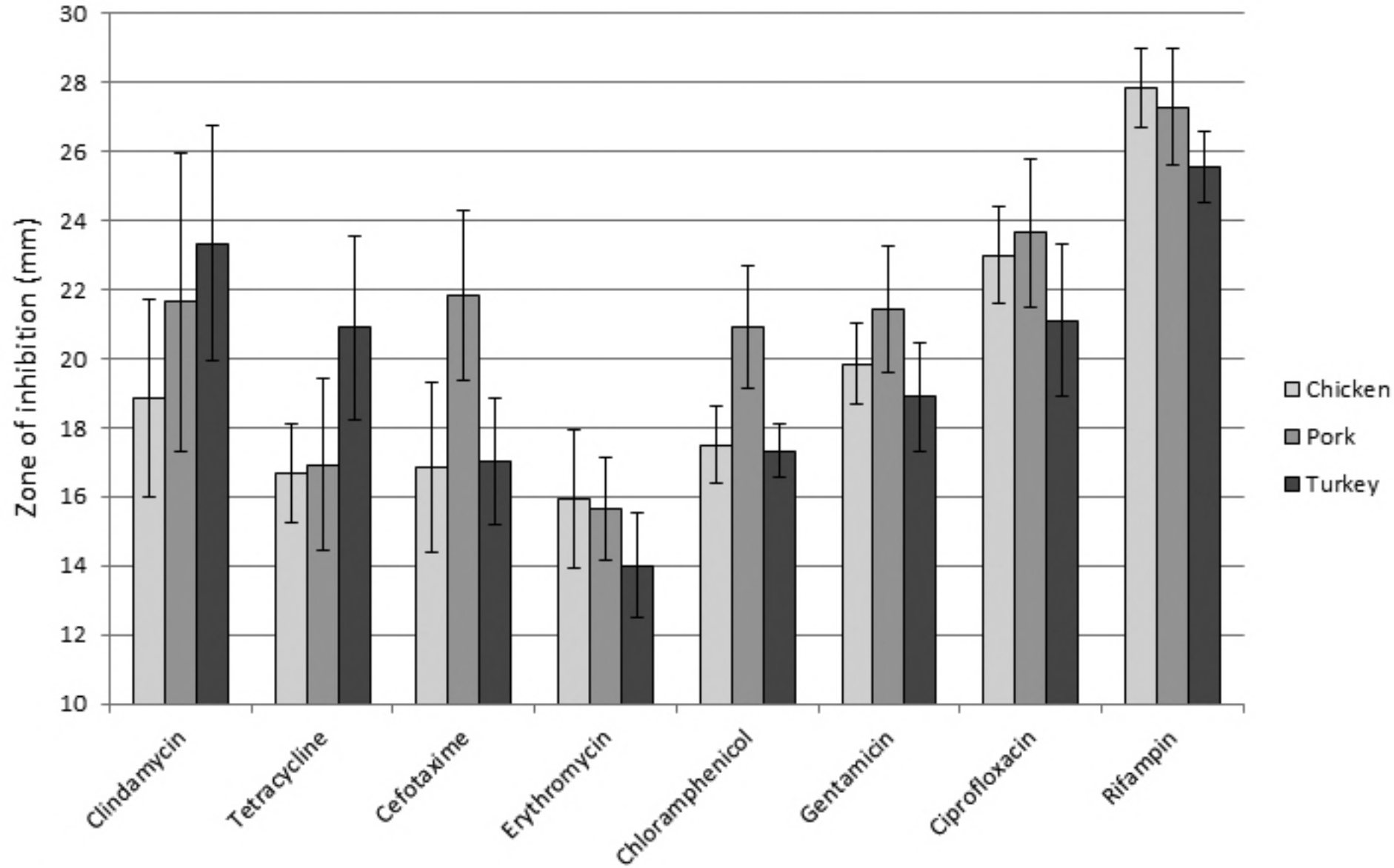


Figure 1

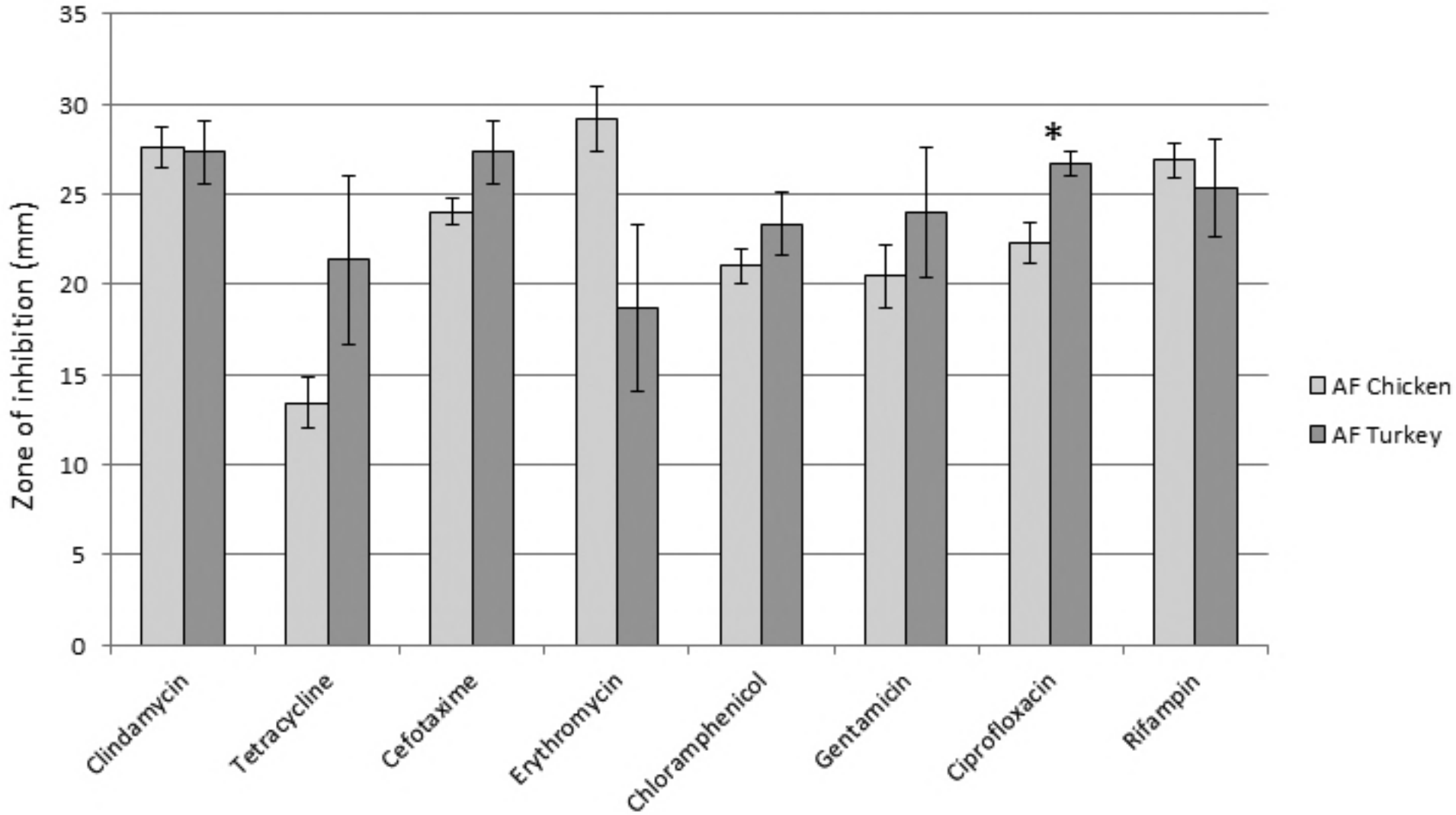


Figure 2

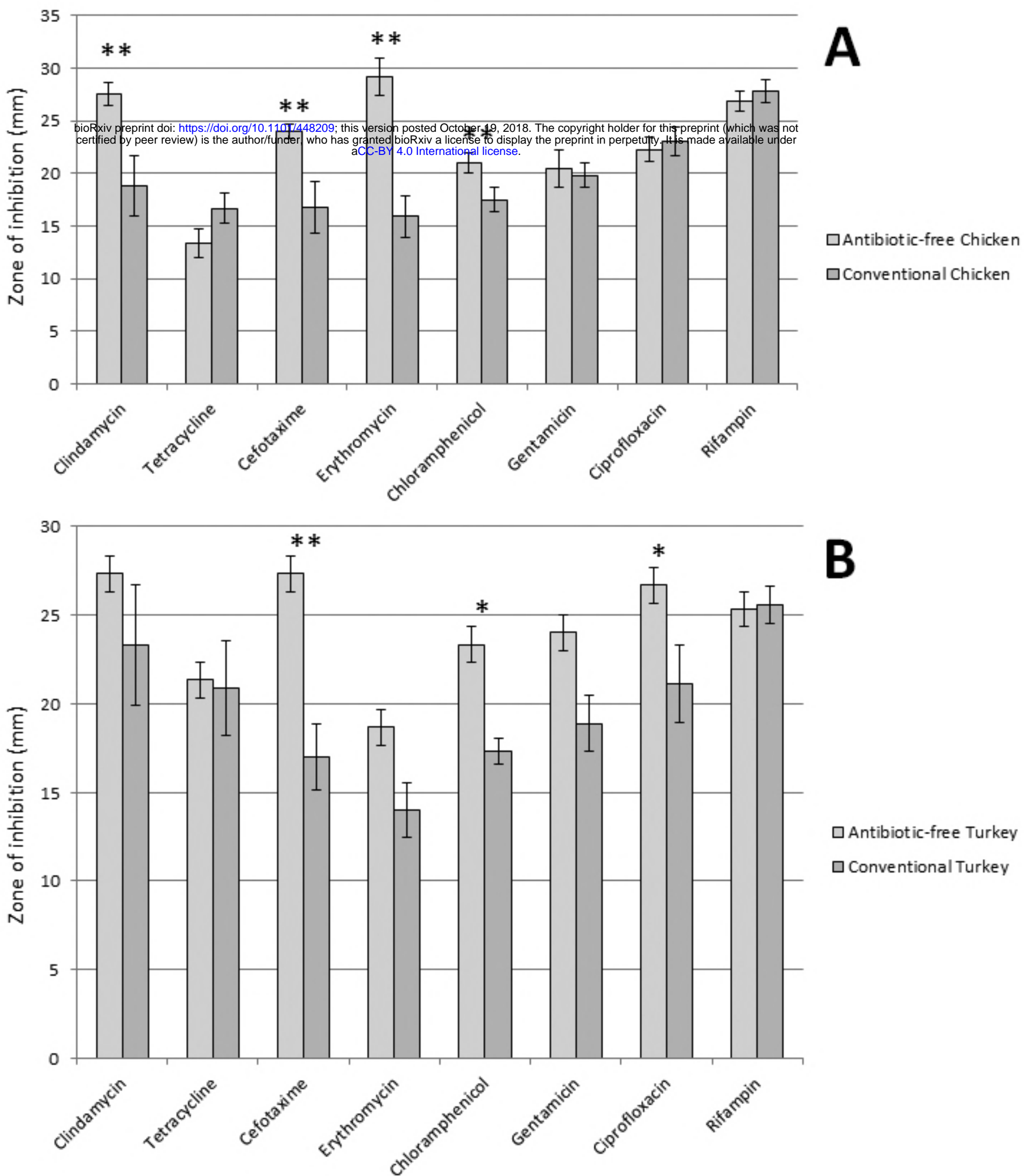


Figure 3