

27) Killing one-day-old male chicks, do we have alternatives? Assessing opinions of ‘the public’ about alternatives to the killing of one-day-old chicks

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Theme n. 3 *Zoomorphisms and anthropomorphisms*

Abstract

Throughout the world male chicks of layer breeds are killed just after hatch, as they are not profitable in producing meat. The Dutch and European parliaments have insisted on research into alternatives, which should be more acceptable (animal welfare and ethically) than the current killing. To gain insight into the public opinion on acceptability of alternatives, the topic was discussed with small groups of people (focus groups, n=6 x 8) and a public inquiry through internet (n=1200) was instituted. To inform the participants a film was made which showed the current practice, eight possible alternatives that prevent male chicks to be born and the option of “dual purpose chickens”. There were also questions about willingness to pay extra for eggs and chicken meat, if killing of male chicks could be prevented.

Many participants did not know about the practice of killing male chicks and they were initially shocked. However, they were able to discuss a broad variety of considerations, and rank different alternatives.

Alternatives “looking into the fresh egg and not incubating ‘male’ eggs”, “dual purpose chickens” and “influencing the parents due to which fewer eggs with a male embryo are laid” scored higher than accepting the current killing. Alternatives where embryo’s have to be killed, or male embryo’s carry lethal factors, scored far below the current killing.

In our presentation we will discuss the lay out, results, argumentation of the respondents and broader context of assessing a public opinion on such a complicated topic.

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