

Social and ethical aspects of (alternatives to) the killing of day-old male chicks


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Introduction, origin of the issue

- Since the fifties: demand for safe and cheap food
 - Innovation / new techniques and developments (housing, veterinary care, etc.)
 - Competition in sector
- Specialised and efficient poultry sector

- Main consequences:
 - Demand for safe and cheap food is met
- 
- Public concern about treatment of animals

Introduction, alternatives

- Raise the males for meat production

Different ways to achieve:

- Rear layer males
- Use a less specialised chicken

Introduction, alternatives

- In ovo sex determination

Different moments

- Before incubation (most likely possible with GM)
- During incubation

Different techniques

- Analyse a sample from the egg
- Direct optic techniques (spectroscopy)
- Genetic Modification (GM) to facilitate optic detection

Research questions

- Why is the killing of day-old chicks problematic?
- Which ethical aspects are involved in the different situations?
- Do the alternatives have the potential to really solve the problem of killing day old male chicks?

Method

Reflective Equilibrium Model (REM)

- Exploration
 - Explication

 - **Analysis**
 - **Who are involved and what is their perspective?**
 - **Which arguments are relevant to answer the moral question?**
- Ethical Matrix**
- Consideration
 - Approach

Ethical matrix

Respect for:	Well-being / to do good	Autonomy / choice	Justice / fairness
Citizen	Food safety Acceptability	Consumers' choice	Affordable product Availability
Egg sector	Maintain profitable Quality of life	Freedom of management	Fair trade Fair legislation
Day-old male chicks	Animal welfare	Integrity Right to life Naturalness	Intrinsic value
Environment	Use of resources Waste output		



Arguments

■ Current situation

Positive:

- Efficient production
 - Affordable source of animal protein
 - Low environmental impact per unit of product

Negative:

- The aspects concerning day-old chicks
 - Interpretation and rating of importance differs between different groups of people)

Ethical matrix, current situation

Respect for:	Well-being / to do good	Autonomy / choice	Justice / fairness
Citizen	Food safety Acceptability -	Consumers' choice	Affordable product Availability +
Egg sector	Maintain profitable Quality of life	Freedom of management	Fair trade Fair legislation
Day-old male chicks	Animal welfare -	Integrity Right to life - Naturalness	Intrinsic value -
Environment	Use of resources Waste output +		

Arguments

■ Dual purpose

Positive:

- Aspects concerning day-old chicks improve (importance depends on stakeholder)
- Freedom of choice

Negative:

- Relatively inefficient production
 - More expensive product
 - Market
 - Higher environmental impact



Ethical matrix, dual purpose

Respect for:	Well-being / to do good	Autonomy / choice	Justice / fairness
Citizen	Food safety Acceptability	Consumers' choice	Affordable product - Availability
Egg sector	Maintain profitable - Quality of life	Freedom of management	Fair trade Fair legislation
Day-old male chicks	Animal welfare +	Integrity Right to life + Naturalness	Intrinsic value +
Environment		Use of resources Waste output -	

Arguments

■ In ovo sex determination

Positive:

- Efficient production
 - Affordable source of animal protein
 - Low environmental impact

Positive / Negative:

- Aspects concerning day-old chicks improve or become worse, depending on
 - Technique (e.g. invasive vs. non-invasive or GM vs. no GM)
 - View (e.g. citizen or sector)



Ethical matrix, in ovo sex determination

Respect for:	Well-being / to do good	Autonomy / choice	Justice / fairness
Citizen	Food safety Acceptability	Consumers' choice	Affordable product Availability
Egg sector	Maintain profitable Quality of life	Freedom of management	Fair trade Fair legislation
Day-old male chicks	Animal welfare +	Integrity Right to life + / - Naturalness	Intrinsic value + / -
Environment	Use of resources Waste output +		

Discussion

- Examples of ethical dilemmas:
 - Inefficient production with dual purpose (environment vs. animal and market vs. animal)
 - How to value importance of killing a young animal vs. killing an embryo at certain stage?
 - How important is the utilization of the chicks/embryos?
 - How to weight the different interpretation and appreciation between, for example, citizen and sector? E.g. with regard to production efficiency?

Conclusions

- Killing of day-old chicks is problematic because the aspects intrinsic value, animal integrity and right to life are violated
- Dual purpose alternative:
 - Most positive in relation to the ethical objections with regard to the animal
 - Inefficient (environment/market)
- In ovo gender determination:
 - Change in animal related objections: partly improves
 - Efficient
- Alternatives give rise to new ethical dilemmas:
 - Difficult to compare

Questions or remarks?

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