

P-06-1202: Ban the killing of day old chicks in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 01 Tachwedd 2021
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Petition Number: P-06-1202

Petition title: Ban the killing of day old chicks in Wales

Text of petition: To produce laying hens only female chicks are needed. Male chicks are killed shortly after hatching. The chicks are killed by gassing or maceration. Gassing is likely to be highly aversive, while maceration is brutal. Technology exists by which the sex of an egg can be determined, so male eggs can be prevented from hatching. France and Germany will ban the killing of male chicks by 2021 and 2022 respectively. Wales should now ban this practice too and provide a lead to the rest of the UK.

1. Background

In the poultry industry, chicks unviable for the production of eggs or meat (e.g. males or sickly, injured or deformed chicks) are disposed of in hatcheries at one-day old.



Hatcheries must ensure every chick in their care is humanely dispatched by a trained and competent person in accordance with the provisions of the relevant welfare at the time of killing legislation.

The *Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Wales) Regulations 2014* make provision in Wales for the administration and enforcement of European Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing. The Council Regulation requires that no avoidable pain, distress or suffering is caused by the method of disposal, and operators must be aware of their responsibility to treat each chick with care and consideration.

The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) has published a 'Code of practice for the disposal of chicks in hatcheries' (2019). The Code sets minimum standards based on current legislation, scientific evidence and best practice. It states:

Every hatchery must have documented procedures in place to cover the handling and methods of disposal used for cull chicks. These must include the effective and safe operation of equipment and its setting-up, regular maintenance and cleaning.

They must also contain contingency plans for emergencies, or equipment failure. A member of hatchery staff must be appointed as the Hatchery Welfare Officer to be responsible for the chick cull operation and to ensure the welfare of each chick is protected. This person must have the skill, knowledge, training and authority to take appropriate action, if and when necessary.

The Code considers the different methods of killing, and classes Instantaneous Mechanical Destruction (IMD) to be humane, as well as various methods of gas killing.

The petition mentions that the culling of male chicks will be banned in France and Germany. Breeders will need to equip themselves with machines to detect the sex of chicks before they hatch so that male chicks are not produced and culled. In France subsidies totalling 10 million euros will be granted for breeders to buy the machines.

Germany and France (with the support of Austria, Spain, Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal) submitted a document to other Member State agriculture ministers, calling for an EU-wide chick culling ban.

EU Food Safety Commissioner, Stella Kyriakides, said "The killing of large numbers of day-old chicks is, of course, an ethical issue." The European

Commission is expected to use the upcoming review of EU animal welfare rules to look at the issue.

2. Welsh Government action

The paper on this petition from the Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd, Lesley Griffiths, states:

We are monitoring progress with the work going on globally to find alternatives to culling male chicks, including technology which can detect the sex of a chick before it hatches, and how this could be applied commercially. Any decision to ban the practice would need to be based on evidence and expert advice.

3. Welsh Parliament action

There has been no significant action by the Senedd to ban the killing of day-old chicks.

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