

Phasing-out chick culling



Background

Each year, more than 45 million male chicks are killed immediately after hatching in Germany alone. Campaigns to encourage the rearing and fattening of male chicks are not commercially viable for the majority of farms due to the substantial resources required if male chicks are to gain sufficient meat. The practice of in-egg sexing is currently the most promising commercially viable technology to facilitate the phasing-out of chick culling. The endocrinological process enables the sex of an embryo to be determined between the eighth and the tenth day of incubation.

Germany's Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture (BMEL) wants to put a stop to the practice of chick culling. A draft amendment to the Animal Welfare Act (TierSchGÄndG 6) prohibits the culling of male chicks. In addition, it prohibits any sexing procedure undertaken after the seventh day of incubation.

The REWE Group welcomes the Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture's commitment to greater animal welfare and is openly in favour of prohibiting chick culling. However, animal welfare will only improve if current commercially viable alternatives are permitted. Important research into the existing technology is contingent on legal certainty. Alternatively, we may see the trend towards the importation of pullets from abroad, where the culling of male chicks is still lawful.



Our approach

We take a critical view of the requirement in the draft law to undertake testing before the seventh day of incubation. This will come into force on 31 December 2023. None of the commercially viable technologies have this capability at present. There is currently no evidence to suggest that further developments to the endocrinological process will enable sexing prior to the seventh day of incubation. A ban such as this will effectively mean an end to the endocrinological process, as the lack of legal clarity will stop urgently required investments being made into developing the approach. At worst, it may lead to the import of day-old chicks from the rest of Europe, thus merely relocating the practice of culling from Germany to elsewhere. This not only runs counter to the notion of animal welfare but would also be detrimental to the German agricultural sector.

At the REWE Group, we are long-standing advocates of schemes to significantly improve the welfare of animals in our egg and poultry supply chains. Following the launch of 'Spitz & Bube' at REWE in 2016 and 'Herzbube' at Penny in 2017, we are now able to sell products promoting the rearing of male chicks. Moreover, we have driven innovation in this sector. We brought the endocrinological gender identification process to the market and made it available to all our competitors through our collaboration with the company RESPEGGT and the University of Leipzig.

Our view on the appropriate way forward

- We support a legal framework to protect the welfare of male chicks and prohibit the culling of male chicks.
- Sexing of chicks after the seventh day of incubation must continue to be lawful to prevent culling from being outsourced. To continue to safeguard animal welfare, sexing after the tenth day of incubation should be prohibited by law.

Your Public Affairs contact on this topic



Niclas Biener
Senior Manager Public Affairs

+49 151 55 12 1091

About REWE Group

The cooperatively organized REWE Group is one of the leading trade and tourism groups in Germany and Europe. In 2020, the company generated a total external turnover of around 75 billion euros. Founded in 1927, REWE Group operates with 380,000 employees in 21 European countries.

The sales lines include REWE, REWE CENTER and BILLA as well as BILLA PLUS and ADEG supermarkets and consumer stores, the discounter PENNY, the drugstores BIPA and the toom Baumarkt DIY stores. The company also operates convenience stores REWE To Go and the e-commerce activities REWE Lieferservice and Zooroyal. The Lekkerland Group comprises the wholesale activities of the business group in the area of on-the-go consumption. Travel and tourism under the umbrella of DER Touristik Group includes the tour operators ITS, Jahn Reisen, Dertour, Meiers Weltreisen, ADAC Reisen, Kuoni, Helvetic Tours, Apollo und Exim Tours and more than 2,400 travel agencies (e.g. DER Reisebüro, DERPART and cooperation partners), the hotel chains Iti, Club Calimera, Coeee, PrimaSol and Playitas Resort and the direct tour operator clevertours.com.