

One step closer to preventing mass death of roosters

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The Dutch biotech start-up In Ovo is the first company to develop a large-scale solution for determining the sex of a chick while it is still in the egg. This fast and cheap technique can be applied mechanically at hatcheries, which was not possible before.

In Ovo's innovation brings us one step closer to preventing the mass death of day-old male chicks. There are other techniques for determining the sex of a chick before it has hatched, such as measuring the level of estrogen in the egg. But this method takes four hours and it is very expensive, which makes it unsuitable for use in hatcheries. In Ovo's technology now makes this possible.

Determining the sex of a chick in a matter of seconds

According to founders Wouter Bruins and Wil Stutterheim, In Ovo is the first company to determine the gender of an unhatched egg in a matter of seconds. The company has identified new substances that indicate the sex of an egg as early as day nine of incubation. These substances are fast and relatively easy to detect, says Bruins. The technique has been tested at a Dutch hatchery, where the company was able to hatch roosters and hens separately on several occasions. The method is also fast enough to separate large amounts of eggs automatically. The first prototype for a sorting device is currently being developed.

Important innovation

This new technique is an important breakthrough. On a yearly basis, over 45 million male chicks are killed in the Netherlands alone because they cannot be used for [egg production](#). Globally, 3.2 billion roosters are killed every year. In addition to preventing a lot of unnecessary suffering, the method also yields environmental benefits. Fewer [eggs](#) have to be hatched, resulting in lower energy consumption and a lower CO2 output. In Ovo's invention consequently also offers hatcheries financial advantages.

Provided by Leiden University

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