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**From:** [REDACTED]@kiezebrink.co.uk  
**Sent:** Friday, February 24, 2023 1:22 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@kiezebrink.nl  
**Subject:** RE: Informal request for info on day old chicks

Hi [REDACTED],

I wanted to send you some information from various sources to help support the lobby effort to continue the culling of male day-old chicks (DOC) in the UK until viable alternatives to this practice are found.

In terms of viable alternatives, these need to be financially viable to the hatchery business, but also environmentally viable. It doesn't seem that in-ovo sexing technology is currently at a point where it is economically viable for a hatchery or even accurate enough. Also, it is unclear if the

chick embryo been sexed with the current in-ovo sexing technology is young enough to not be classified as a “living animal”. Another question is; do these male sexed eggs then have any commercial value, or are they just an unusable waste product?

In terms of environmentally viable alternatives, it is our understanding that some hatcheries in Europe now need to raise the male chicks to 12 weeks as they aren’t allowed to cull day-old male chicks. These male poults are then transported to Poland for slaughter and then used in pet food as they aren’t suitable for human consumption. Surely the animal welfare impacts of this alternative are worse than culling a day old chick! Also, the carbon footprint of this alternative is significantly more than culling day-old male chicks. At a time when climate change and carbon emissions are at the top of most agendas, this isn’t a suitable alternative.

Currently the hatching, culling, transporting and storage of the male chicks used as animal food is undertaken by a few specialists licenced companies which are annually inspected by the governments APHA agency. This is a very controlled process where animal welfare and disease control and prevention can carefully be monitored and traced. However, if cheap DOC are no longer available animal and pet keepers may be forced into producing their own livestock to use as animal food. This will pose a much greater risk in terms of poor animal welfare and the spread of disease. At a time when avian influenza is prevalent on an annual basis this is something which needs to be considered carefully before cutting off a vital well managed and controlled animal food source in the UK.

As a company Kiezebrink UK Ltd sell in the region of 17 million DOC per year in the UK. This equates to about 680 tonnes of DOC per year. Of these, 8-9 million are sources from UK hatcheries while the remained are imported from the EU. The UK hatcheries don’t produce enough chicks to supply the UK demand.

Below I have inserted some references from reputable people about highlighting the desirability of maintaining access to DOC as an essential food source for the UK.

### **[REDACTED]**

I think it would be fair and accurate to say that it would cripple us if we lost DOC as a valuable food supply in the future, and in the short term we have already had a pretty tough time and don't need to add to that to cause us more financial problems. I suspect it would do uncountable damage to those doing rehabilitation, and to zoos who have relied on this food source for so long. We have been using DOC's since 1966!

### **Rehabilitation**

The Male Day Old Chicks have been a God send to rehabilitators for a number of reasons. Firstly, most rehabilitators have funding problems, Veterinary care is expensive as is building and maintaining suitable housing, let alone the care of the birds. Day Old Chicks are the cheapest resource of meat for the many species that require it and therefore vital to the finances of those taking on rehabilitation. It should be pointed out here that unlike some countries, care of wildlife in the UK is not undertaken by government, it is done by private individuals who care, with no funding from government.

Another advantage of DOC's is that they are a small package of food that is easy to store, thaw quickly and can be skinned quickly which is more than can be said for rats and worse for mice. The advantages of being able to remove the skin easily is that many birds and animals come in emaciated and need a food that is easy to digest, so after being given fluid treatment DOC's are the first food item that sick birds and animals are usually offered, and it helps them gain enough weight and condition to move onto larger food items.

Conversely, if there are birds or animals that require roughage, again DOS's are the best option, the fluff/feathers is easy to pass through the animal or bird, makes a good casting if it is a bird that regurgitates, and does not like mouse or rat fur tend to impact the stomachs or small or recovering birds and animals.

Without DOC's many rehabilitation centres will be hard pushed to accept the numbers of carnivorous birds and animals that they do now.

### **Hen Harrier Conservation**

One of the points in the government's 6 point plan for the recovery of Hen Harriers in Northern England is diversionary feeding. This is done under license by moorland keepers who start to place DOC's onto feeding platforms at the start of the wild Hen Harrier breeding season. This important and reliable food source means that the wild Hen Harriers take less Grouse chicks during the breeding season, and thus allow Game Keepers to have enough grouse to please their landowners. This has been done for a number of years now and not only does it work in terms of reducing the numbers of grouse chicks taken. It assists the Hen Harriers in rearing their young and has without doubt helped to change the opinion of Land owners and game keepers to Hen Harriers, thus reducing the illegal persecution. In 2016 no Hen Harriers bred in the North of England, this year (2021) 83 chicks have been produced, the highest numbers for many years and in a year that has a vole population crash. The diversionary feeding is an integral part of this plan and would be badly impacted without DOC's as indeed would the task of rehabilitators of wildlife.

### **[REDACTED]**

One of the conservation programmes here in the UK that has directly benefited from a ready access to cheap DOC's was the now hugely successful and hence discontinued reintroduction programme for Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*). Likewise, I believe the hacking back of White-tailed Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) on the Scottish Isles also utilised DOC's as a significant proportion of the food items used. The programme to reintroduce White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) into the UK will call substantially on provision of DOC's as has been the case in boosting numbers of this species in many West European countries, for example the programme for boosting wild numbers at Rheine Zoo, Germany involves providing over a thousand chicks per day through the main breeding season. We can find similar examples - ex situ and in situ for species such as Waldrapp Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*), captive-breeding and wild reinforcing of populations of Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*), Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*), etc. all of which are and will be very much reliant on this cheap whole animal protein source.

### **[REDACTED]**

DOC are an excellent source of food (with balanced Ca:P ratio) for wild injured rehab and hospitalised raptors, and other carnivorous patients.

Below you will see that I have inserted in red some replies to your initial email.

We would also be available to have a Teams meet with yourself if you would like to ask a few more questions and get a better insight into the day old chick market in the UK. I would ask our other director and founder Hanno Kiezebrink to join the meeting as he has decades of experience working with the chick industry across Europe. We would be available for a meeting on Thursday or Friday next week. Let me know if this is of interest to you?

If you require anything else then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

**Tel:** [REDACTED] **Mobile:** [REDACTED] **Email:** [\[REDACTED\]@kiezebrink.co.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@kiezebrink.co.uk)

[www.kiezebrink.co.uk](http://www.kiezebrink.co.uk)



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Great Chesterford, Essex, CB10 1PF VAT Reg. No. GB 792761588 DEFRA No: 383710057

We are rated **4.8** out of 5



★ Trustpilot

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 30 January 2023 10:29

**To:** [\[REDACTED\]@kiezebrink.co.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@kiezebrink.co.uk)

**Subject:** Informal request for info on day old chicks

Good morning,

I have also sent this message via your website, so apologies if this reaches you twice. I would be very grateful if you could help me with an informal request for information. We have recently commissioned the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC), an independent advisory board to Government, to look into the alternatives to male chick culling. This is in response to what is currently happening in

Europe re: an increase in the banning of chick culling. Although there are no immediate plans for a ban in the UK, this work will inform future policy work in this area. Amongst other issues, AWC are looking into the possible welfare impacts that could be associated with a ban. One key theme is the removal of chicks as a food source for exotics pets, raptors and zoo animals (and the impact of moving to an alternative food source - e.g., farmed rodents or imported chicks). As part of this work we are struggling to find data to substantiate this issue, and would be very grateful for any help that you might be able to provide. In particular we would be very interested to know the following:

1. Approx. how many whole dead chicks per annum you source from (a) from UK laying hatcheries = 8.5 million, (b) UK broiler hatcheries = 0.  
As the UK hatchery industry can't supply enough whole dead chicks we also sourced another 8.5 million chicks from the EU (mainly The Netherlands).
2. What volume of macerated chicks per annum you buy from (a) UK laying hatcheries =0, (b) UK broiler hatcheries =0. We can't use macerated chicks as animal food. By buying all available whole dead chicks from laying hatcheries this removes the need for them to macerate the male chicks. Very few chicks are macerated from laying hatcheries in the UK as companies like ourselves and Honeybrook Animal Foods buy them all. Therefore, the laying hatcheries have very little waste as these males chicks are all utilised as valuable animal food.
3. What is the approx. % break down of your customers for whole chicks: i.e., (a) exotic pet owners (presumably mainly reptiles?) 5%, (b) zoos 30%, (c) raptors/falconry 60%, (d) other 5%?
4. What is the approx. % break down of your customers for macerated chicks: i.e., (a) exotic pet owners (presumably mainly reptiles?), (b) zoos, (c) raptors/falconry, (d) other? All 0% as we don't buy macerated chicks.
5. Approx. what percentage of the whole chicks produced in the UK get exported overseas for falconry? From Kiezebrink UK = 0%. UK has a shortage of chicks so we don't export. Our company in Holland export chicks as there are surplus chicks available in the EU.

Any info on the above would be most gratefully received. Many thanks in advance for your help with this matter.

Very best wishes

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Transforming Farm Animal Health & Welfare

**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** | Horizon House, Deanery Road, Bristol Email:

[\[REDACTED\]@defra.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk) | Typical hours between: 09:00 – 17:30h, Monday to Friday