

# 鶏卵肉情報

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「Animal welfare movement inside and outside of Japan;

**Banning of male chick culling and broiler new standard proposal etc.」**

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In this article I provide the recent Animal Welfare(AW) topics inside and outside Japan based on my visiting experiences in Germany and the United States of America(USA) in 2023 in the following orders.

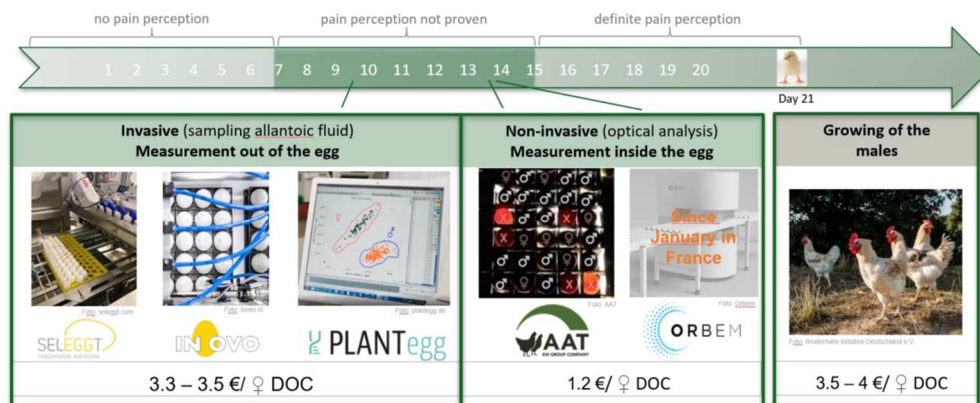
- (1) Alternative proposals to the banning of male chick culling at the layer hatcheries in Germany
- (2) New AW standard proposal of broilers in European Union (EU)
- (3) Broiler farm compliant with the AW regulations in USA
- (4) National AW guidelines in Japan
- (5) Summary

## **(1) Alternative proposals to banning of male chick culling for layers in Germany**

I visited ZDG (The German Poultry Association) in September 2023 and had a chance to hear about the alternative proposals to banning of male chick culling.

The culling of male chicks in Germany has been banned since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2022. As they cannot cull the male chicks, there are three alternatives.

The Photo 1 shows the three alternatives, that is, (1) Invasive In-Ovo sexing (taking samples from allantoic fluid) which is measured outside the eggs, (2) Noninvasive (optical analysis) In-Ovo sexing which is measured inside the eggs, (3) Rearing both female and male chicks. Non invasive In-Ovo sexing is the cheapest but the cost of €1.2 per egg is still very expensive. After the male chick culling was banned, small hatcheries gave up operation due to high cost, resulting in the decrease of hatchery number from 22 in 2021 to 15 in 2022.



**Photo 1.** Animal Welfare regulation - Present alternatives

Following are the egg selling prices and descriptions on the egg packages of 2 different stores. In the EDEKA supermarket in Berlin, the eggs produced by the layer farms who also rear male chicks were selling at €2.99 (approximately ¥ 463) for 10 eggs. There was a comment on the egg package “Protect me! INITIATIVE LEBENSWERT.DE supports the protection for male chicks” (Photo 2).



Supermarket EDEKA



**Photo 2.** Package written as ““Protect me! INITIATIVE LEBENSWERT.DE supports the protection for male chicks”

In the PENNY supermarket in the east of Stuttgart, the eggs produced by the layers In-Ovo sexed before hatching and male eggs not hatched were selling at €1.99 (¥ 308) for 10 eggs. There was a comment on the egg package “Without chick culling” (Photo 3). The price of the eggs produced by the layer farms who also rear males were 50 % higher. I was surprised to see the illustrations of chick, on most of the egg packages (Photo 4).



Photo 3. Package written as “Without chick culling”



Photo 4. Illustration of “Chick”

## (2) New AW standard proposal of broilers in EU

The Council Directive for broiler AW adopted in 2007 by European Union (EU) comes to under review stage now. The Watt Poultry article on December 5, 2023 introduced the comment from Mr. Jan Henriksen, CEO, Aviagen broiler breeding group, regarding the scientific opinion of broiler AW from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) proposal (AW standard proposal). He said “The broilers currently achieve body-weight gains of 65-68 grams per day but AW standard proposal limits broiler growth rates to no more than 50 grams per day. If the proposal were accepted, these new regulations would switch the EU from the net exporter to the importer of chicken meat”. Additionally, this will have the great influence on the chicken meat exporters of Thailand and Brazil.

\* Watt Poultry article ([https://www.wattagnet.com/blogs/food-safety-processing-perspective/blog/15636544/proposed-efsa-regulations-threaten-eu-broiler-producers?utm\\_source=Omeda&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_content=NLPoultry+Update&utm\\_campaign=NLPoultry+Update\\_20231206\\_1900&oly\\_enc\\_id=0139HI739701CIU](https://www.wattagnet.com/blogs/food-safety-processing-perspective/blog/15636544/proposed-efsa-regulations-threaten-eu-broiler-producers?utm_source=Omeda&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=NLPoultry+Update&utm_campaign=NLPoultry+Update_20231206_1900&oly_enc_id=0139HI739701CIU))

## (3) Broiler farm compliant with AW regulations in USA

I would like to give an example of the broiler farm compliant with AW regulations in USA. In August 2023, I visited the broiler farm of Amish Country Poultry (Miller brand) in Indiana. In addition to density allowances for broilers, the farm had three AW related equipment installed, that is, ①windows for natural sunlight ②hiding place (dark place) ③perches (pipe) (Photo 5).

In the Kroger supermarket in Fort Wayne, the selling price of the Miller AW boneless

chicken breast meat was \$6.99 per pound (Photo 6), boneless chicken thigh meat was \$5.99 per pound. On the other hand, the selling price of Tyson regular chicken breast meat was \$4.49 per pound (Photo 7), boneless chicken thigh meat was 3.99 dollars per pound. The selling price of boneless chicken breast meat was only 12% higher than boneless chicken thigh meat and the price difference between breast and thigh meat becomes small. But the selling price of the AW chicken meat was 50 % more expensive than the regular chicken meat.



Photo 5. Windows for natural sunlight,



Hiding (dark) place, Perches (pipe)



Photo 6. The selling price of boneless chicken breast meat: \$6.99 per pound



Photo 7. The selling price of boneless chicken breast meat:\$4.49 per pound

#### (4) National AW guidelines in Japan

The economic loss caused by COVID-19 was so huge as it was said to be more than 1 quadrillion yens (7 trillion dollars). I consider that AW can be the basic prevention to the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza derived pandemic. On July 26 2023 the new national AW guidelines for livestock were released as the notification from the Director General of the Livestock Industry Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and then the national AW guidelines were finally established. Japanese AW has been continuously said to lag behind most countries. When more understanding and cooperation to bear the AW cost, can be gained widely among consumers, distributors, processors and government, Japanese AW can be put into practice as EU.



In this sense, establishing the AW guidelines in Japan is a good start. The guidelines do not mention about the necessity of the certification system but this may be needed to gain the understanding and cooperation from the stakeholders. AW in Japan is moving ahead since AW certification bodies have been established upon the request of supporters.

The contents of the guidelines are to clarify the difference between “Implementation recommended (should)” and “Future implementation recommended (desirable)”. After the release of the guidelines, the authorities monitor the implementation status and set the specific year for the achievement goal of “should”. For that purpose, first of all it is important to make observations and record keeping as the management methods written in the broiler and layer guidelines Chapter 1.1.

For record keeping, “Implementation recommended (should)” is described as follows. Bird health condition, occurrence or nonoccurrence and reasons of disease and accident, the number of dead birds, occurrence or nonoccurrence of feather pecking, feed amount or feed intake amount, sufficient drinking water, maximum and minimum temperature, humidity etc. should be daily recorded. The dead rate, culled rate, morbidity rate, and production performance per day, per week and per cumulative total should be within expected range recorded by observing the dead rate, disease rate, culled rate on the occasion of important rearing management, and regularly recorded with the reason of increase or decrease, treatment method etc. If necessary, recording items will be added when the behaviors suggesting AW problem can be observed (refer to chapter 7.6 for broiler, refer to the chapter 7.2 for laying hens). For laying hens, more items including laying condition (egg laying rate etc.) need to be recorded compared to broilers.

Six behaviors written in the broiler guidelines chapter 7.6 are “fear behaviors, spatial distribution, panting and wing spreading, dust bathing, feeding • drinking • foraging, feather pecking and cannibalism”. On the other hand, 12 behaviors written in the laying hens guidelines chapter 7.2 are “dust bathing, fear behaviors, feeding • drinking • foraging behaviors, injurious feather pecking and cannibalism, locomotion and comfort behaviors, nesting, perches, resting and sleeping, social behaviors, spatial distribution, thermoregulatory behaviors, vocalization”.

## **(5) Summary**

AW started from EU is transitioning into the next stage. In EU from the perspective of AW

laying hens, the male culling in the layer hatcheries draws very high attention. I was surprised to see the chicks are illustrated on the egg packages in supermarkets in German where the culling of male chicks has been banned since January 1st 2022. I keenly feel that we need to carefully produce the hatching eggs in the breeder farms, produce healthy chicks in the hatchery, and cherishingly rear the chicks in the farms.

About the recent movement of broiler AW , EU considers to make the broiler AW standards established in 2007 more strict, regardless of the AW proposal's result. In US the number of AW broiler farms with AW related equipment tends to increase.

On the other hand, in Japan among securing five AW freedoms, the freedom to express normal behavioral pattern is the issue to be solved. It seems not so difficult to secure the freedom to express the normal behaviors if we introduce stocking density allowance and provide AW-related equipment such as windows for natural sunlight, perches, and playing tools. It is a good start to introduce various equipment to the broiler farms within the possible range so that the freedom to express normal behavioral pattern among other five freedoms can be secured. I believe that AW certification is needed to gain the understanding and cooperation from the stakeholders.

In order to meet the AW guidelines in Japan, of course we should make efforts in direct rearing management, but furthermore need to implement higher level of efforts such as acquiring more detailed observation and recording, knowledge and skill, equipment, preparing plans etc. Among them, the observation and recording are important as written in the broiler and laying hen guidelines chapter 1.1.

According to the Second World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) Opinion Exchange Meeting held by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in December 14 2023, the revised proposal of “chapter 7.1. introduction to the recommendations for animal welfare ”, states the concepts of the “five domains” as well as five freedoms, and is planned to be adopted in the General Session of the WOAH to be held in May 2024. This proposal of the AW basic principles says that “The five freedoms (freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition, freedom from fear and distress, freedom from physical and thermal discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and disease, freedom to express the normal behavioral pattern) provide the index useful to AW. And the five domains (nutrition, environment, health, behavioral interactions, mental state) back up the systematic science-based assessment”.