

PE1797/A

Scottish Government submission of 20 July 2020

You ask for the Scottish Government's views on Petition PE01797 lodged by Ms Kirsten McQuarrie calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ban the maceration of newborn male chicks and set a deadline to end all live chick culling in the egg industry.

The petitioner corresponded along these lines with officials in January 2020 and we understand that Ms McQuarrie considers that, in line with some EU and EEC countries, Scotland should consider banning maceration immediately. Ms McQuarrie also seeks an end to all culling practices when research has identified a means to identify male chicks whilst still in the egg.

The Scottish Government takes the welfare of all animals extremely seriously at all stages of their lives. The killing of surplus chicks which are less than 72 hours old and embryos in hatchery waste is regulated by Schedule 11 of The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 ("the 1995 Regulations"). The 1995 Regulations permit only three methods of killing, which the Scottish Government considers to ensure the welfare of the chicks during the killing process:

- Use of a mechanical apparatus producing immediate death;
- Exposure to gas mixtures; or
- Dislocation of the neck.

Under the 1995 Regulations any mechanical apparatus used must be used by a skilled operator and be designed so as to produce immediate death without any unnecessary suffering caused to the chicks.

The Scottish Government is aware of ongoing research into methods of determining the sex of a chick prior to hatching. However, the methods currently available are not viable on an industrial scale. The Scottish Government will continue to monitor developments in this area of research.

I trust that this information is helpful, and if you require any further information please let me know.