

CRISPR-edited eggs offer novel way to eliminate slaughter of newborn male chicks

[Most consumers] are blissfully unaware that the egg industry also slaughters billions of animals every year, but not to put meat on the table. Indeed, the animals in question (male chicks) have literally just been born.

The reasons are simple, says Yehuda Elram, co-founder and CEO of Israeli startup [eggXYt??](#), which recently hit the headlines after teaming up with Tropic Biosciences on a groundbreaking project to harness gene silencing technology to develop genetic resistance in chickens to avian flu.

The food industry, says Elram, raises two different breeds of chicken: broilers for meat, and layers for eggs. The problem is that male layers are of no use to the egg or meat industry: they can't lay eggs, and there's no market for their meat (too scrawny).

So we waste millions of dollars incubating billions of eggs, waiting for them to hatch, hiring trained 'sexers' to determine if they're female or male, and then culling 50% of chicks the very day they're born.

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The appeal of eggXYt's solution – using CRISPR gene editing techniques to add a [genetic marker??](#) to male eggs that glows when it goes through a scanner – is that it enables sex detection of chick embryos immediately after the eggs are laid.

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Above all, he says, "you're saving lives, and giving supermarkets and consumers what they want, which is more ethical food."

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