Preventing billions of rooster chick deaths annually: Here’s how gene editing could end the culling of male chickens

Dr Yuval Cinnamon from the Volcani institute near Tel Aviv, who is the project’s chief scientist, told BBC News that the development of what he calls the ”Golda hen” will have a huge impact on animal welfare in the poultry industry.

“I am very happy that we have developed a system that I think can truly revolutionise the industry, first of all for the benefit of the chickens but also for all of us, because this is an issue that affects every person on the planet,” he said.

The scientists have gene edited DNA into the Golda hens that can stop the development of any male embryos in eggs that they lay. The DNA is activated when the eggs are exposed to blue light for several hours.

Female chick embryos are unaffected by the blue light and develop normally. The chicks have no additional genetic material inside them nor do the eggs they lay, according to Dr Cinnamon.

“Farmers will get the same chicks they get today and consumers will get exactly the same eggs they get today,” he said. “The only minor difference in the production process is that the eggs will be exposed to blue light.”

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