

KAT – Verein für kontrollierte alternative Tierhaltungsformen e.V.

KAT Guide for Hatcheries

Traceability and assurance of origin –
Rearing and in-ovo sexing methods

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Teil I: Basic principles

1 Preamble

The Verein für kontrollierte alternative Tierhaltungsformen e.V. (Association for Controlled Alternative Animal Husbandry, KAT) is the most important inspection body in Germany and neighbouring EU countries for the inspection of eggs from alternative forms of hen keeping (free-range, barn and organic egg production). Virtually all eggs offered for sale on the German market by the food retail trade bear the KAT conformity seal.

The chief objectives of KAT are:

- to ensure full traceability, assurance of origin, and quality assurance of eggs and egg products from barn, free-range and organic husbandry produced, traded or placed on the market by Members;
- to lay down and implement uniform requirements for the barn, free-range and organic husbandry of laying hens, taking account of animal welfare issues;
- to lay down and implement uniform requirements for the husbandry of male laying hybrids, taking account of animal welfare issues;
- to create transparency for the consumer by providing information (e.g. via the internet portal www.was-steht-auf-dem-ei.de).

2 Rearing and in-ovo sexing methods in the KAT system

The aim of the assurance of origin and traceability system, based on the quantity reports for each production stage (hatchery, rearing, laying farm, packing station/marketer) that must be submitted to the KAT database, is to guarantee a plausible link between the laying hen and the corresponding reared male laying hybrid/in-ovo sexed male hatching eggs. In this way, for eggs produced under these conditions, transparent traceability of the rearing and sex identification methods is provided, and added value is created for consumers as a result.

3 Scope of application

This Guide was developed for the production stages of “Hatchery” and “Animal dealer” within the KAT traceability system and describes the requirements that hatcheries and animal dealers must meet in order to systematically guarantee assurance of origin and traceability of eggs that are marketed under the KAT logo with a label stating “Rearing of male chicks” or a similar message. This Guide applies with effect from 1 July 2025.

With effect from 1 January 2024, it has only been permitted to market eggs using the KAT logo subject to compliance with the requirements in relation to the KAT traceability system “Rearing and in-ovo sexing methods” and if all of the necessary production and distribution systems have been integrated into the KAT system.

4 Participation in the system

Any establishment that wishes to be part of the KAT value chain must register with KAT at www.anmeldung.kat.eu and – if not already a participant in the KAT system – enter into a KAT participant contract.

Once the KAT Office has been provided with all of the necessary registration documents and signed participant contract, the establishment will be given access details for the KAT database.

5 Guaranteeing no killing of chicks in the KAT system

The killing of chicks has been prohibited by law in Germany since 1 January 2022. Hatcheries outside Germany that continue to supply their female chicks to the KAT system from 1 January 2022 onwards must be able to submit documentary evidence proving that the corresponding male chicks have also hatched and been reared in KAT-certified rearing farms or have been selected using an in-ovo sexing method before hatching.

The rearing of male laying hybrids and the use of legally approved in-ovo sexing methods are accepted in the KAT system. Since 1 January 2024, when using in-ovo sexing methods in the KAT system, it must also be ensured that the incubation of the male embryos was terminated before the 13th day of incubation.

In order to avoid the killing of chicks and to ensure the traceability and allocation of flocks of brother roosters to the marketed eggs in the KAT system, batch designations that clearly define the birds included in that batch are assigned by both the hatcheries and the rearing farms when entering the livestock data in the KAT database.

5.1 Batch designation in hatchery

Tab. 1: Batch designation in hatchery

Information	Explanation	Example
KAT ID	Identification number assigned to hatchery by KAT	DE/B-999
Hatch date	YYYYMMDD	20220711
Hybrid variety	Laying hybrid breed identification, comprising a G and sequential number (three-digit)	G000
Sex	Abbreviation for male or female	M or F
Type of production	Information on whether hatching is from organic (0) or conventional (2) production	0 or 2
Method used to avoid killing of chicks	Male chicks are killed Male chicks are reared Use of an in-ovo sexing method	B100 B200 B300
Sequential numbering	Three-digit sequential numbering for clear identification of a batch	000

Blank spaces	All blank spaces are marked with an underscore (“_”).	_
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Examples

Hatching batch DE/B-999_20220118_G010_F_2_B300_000

Organic hatching batch: DE/B-999_20220118_G010_M_0_B200_000

Abbreviations for the labelling of in-ovo sexing methods

B301	Respeggt
B302	Ella
B303	Plantegg
B306	Cheggy Zoom
B305	Genus Focus

Information: This list is correct as at April 2025. An up-to-date list of the in-ovo sexing methods and hybrid varieties can be viewed in the internal members’ area under “DOCUMENTS → Procedural instructions → VA-B-01”. All in-ovo sexing methods that are permitted by law may be used in the KAT system.

6 Responsibilities

Every stage in the value chain is responsible for complying with the described requirements and for correctly reporting the necessary data to the KAT database.

7 Data protection

The data entered by the system participant in the KAT database system are stored on the internet server and computer system and on data storage media. All data are protected against tampering and access by third parties through state-of-the-art technology. Master data are not transferred to third parties and are used exclusively by KAT for participant administration.

Only the KAT Office and the participants themselves have access to the data entered in the system. Data is only disclosed to entities outside the system (“the public”) after consultation with the system participants or on official instruction.

For the purpose of plausibility checks, the KAT Office has comprehensive access rights to participant data and can also access information on bird movements at all production and sales stages included in the KAT system.

8 Internet portal

In order to create greater transparency, KAT offers a special service on the query page at www.was-steht-auf-dem-ei.de: by entering the number printed on the egg (stamp number), consumers can find out the name and location of the laying farm and view pictures of the henhouse and birds. The method used (rearing of cockerels, in-ovo sexing method) to comply with the ban on killing chicks is also stated. The query function is also available as a smartphone app.

Further information on the KAT system can be found at www.kat.eu. Every KAT participant can register for the internal area of the website and download the documents held there (circulars, forms, member lists, etc.).

Teil II: List of requirements

1 Clear separation of KAT chicks and non-KAT chicks

The requirements under Chapter 1 are audited directly in the hatchery during the audit.

1.1 General requirements

- 1.1.1 For every planned hatch date with KAT hatchings, the number of hatching eggs (KAT/non-KAT) set for this purpose and the start of the incubation process are documented.
- 1.1.2 The hatching eggs used for a KAT breeding batch are handled in such a way that any mix-up with the non-KAT breeding batches can be excluded throughout the entire incubation process.
- 1.1.3 After completion of the pre-hatching process, the candling result and the candling date of the KAT hatches should be documented.
- 1.1.4 After hatching, the hatch date and the number of male and female chicks in a KAT hatch are documented.
- 1.1.5 **[K.O.]** Measures are in place to ensure that all chicks (m/f) destined for the KAT system are moved to a KAT rearing farm and that no healthy chicks are killed.
- 1.1.6 The chick boxes are clearly identifiable at all times as being for KAT or non-KAT chicks.

2 KAT database reports and documentation requirements

All bird reports are entered in the KAT database at <https://datenbank.kat.eu>

Every establishment is responsible for correctly inputting the required data in the KAT database itself.

The access details are treated as confidential. The establishments are responsible for the accuracy of the input data.

 *Procedural instruction VA-B-05 Quick Guide_Stock management_Hatchery*

2.1 General requirements for database reports

- 2.1.1 For each planned hatch day with KAT hatchings, all hatching eggs (KAT/non-KAT) set for the hatching day are entered in the KAT database in full as breeding batches.
- 2.1.2 The breeding batches are entered in the KAT database no later than 19 days after the hatching egg has been set.
- 2.1.3 For each breeding batch, the marketable hatched female and male chicks are entered in the KAT database (hatching report) no later than seven days after the hatch date.
- 2.1.4 **[K.O.]** All birds in a KAT breeding batch (m/f) are reported in the KAT database using the KAT ID of the respective receiving farms no later than three weeks after the hatch date.
- 2.1.5 **[K.O.]** For days on which a KAT hatching takes place, all birds in a non-KAT breeding batch (m/f) are additionally reported in the KAT database using the recipient's KAT ID or the general recipient address K000.9 no later than 21 days after the hatch date.
- 2.1.6 **[K.O.]** All chicks (m/f) not destined for the KAT system but delivered to KAT rearing farms are fully reported in the KAT database using the KAT ID of the respective receiving farms.

2.1.7 **[K.O.]** All chicks (m/f) for the KAT system that are sold via an intermediary are reported in full using the corresponding dealer ID.

2.2 Requirements when using in-ovo sexing methods

When using in-ovo sexing methods, the hatchery placing the birds on the market is responsible for obtaining information and for all notifications in the KAT database at every stage in the process chain. This applies regardless of whether the in-ovo sexing method is implemented in-house or by an external third party.

2.2.1 Measures are in place to ensure that the hatchery placing the birds on the market has all of the relevant information for the chicks supplied to the KAT system. The hatchery holds detailed documentation and evidence of all stages from incubation and in-ovo sexing to the hatching of the chicks.

2.2.2 All chicks delivered to the KAT system are reported in full to the KAT database by the hatchery placing them on the market, together with all the necessary information from incubation onwards.

2.2.3 In the case of KAT hatchings, all male chicks hatched due to errors in the in-ovo sexing procedure (mis-sexed) are entered in the KAT database. If the hatched chicks are not re-sexed manually, these hatchings are labelled accordingly in the KAT database.

2.2.4 In the event that a hatching is to take place in a rearing henhouse, this should be reported to KAT in advance of the hatch date using form FB-B-01 B (Notification of hatching in henhouse). The number of hatched chicks is reported to KAT within 7 days of the hatch date.

 *Form FB-B-01-DE_Hatching in henhouse notification*

2.2.5 With regard to the in-ovo sexing process, in addition to the number of female eggs for incubation detected, the number of no-sample eggs, if included in the subsequent incubation process, should be entered in the KAT database. The entries in the KAT database match the documentation and evidence on file.

2.2.6 The hatchery placing the birds on the market holds documents and/or records that at least include the following information:

- ✓ Number of eggs delivered to the site for in-ovo sexing
- ✓ Genetics of delivered eggs
- ✓ State of eggs upon delivery – cold or incubated (with indication of incubation date)
- ✓ Delivery date
- ✓ Date and incubation date of in-ovo sexing
- ✓ In-ovo sexing method
- ✓ Number of female eggs detected and, if included in the subsequent incubation process, number of no-sample eggs
- ✓ Incubation date on which the eggs were transferred to the site where they are hatched

2.2.7 All delivery notes are marked in such a way that they can be clearly allocated (e.g. numbered sequentially).

2.2.8 The KAT logo may be used as a general logo on delivery notes and invoices provided that all of the items on the delivery note are also clearly marked as KAT or third-party goods, or are exclusively KAT goods.


2.2.9 In the event that in-ovo sexing is carried out at an external site, a documented procedure is in place to prevent any confusion between KAT hatching eggs and non-KAT hatching eggs throughout the entire process, including transportation.

3 Documentation requirements

3.1.1 The establishment description is complete and up to date. Any changes to the establishment description are reported to the KAT Office immediately.

 *Form FB-A-01-EN_Establishment description*

3.1.2 Contingency plans with clearly defined responsibilities are in place in the event of an emergency or critical situation. These contain the names and contact details of all key contact persons.

 *Form FB-A-02-EN_Emergency plan*

 *KAT Crisis Management Guide for Member Establishments*

3.1.3 All relevant documents are filed and kept for at least 12 months (invoices/delivery notes, hatch planning, hatch reports, record of in-ovo sexing procedures).

3.1.4 The delivery notes for the chicks at least include the following information:

- ✓ KAT ID (hatchery site)
- ✓ Recipient including KAT ID
- ✓ KAT hatching batch number
- ✓ No. of birds per KAT hatching batch number
- ✓ Genetics
- ✓ Sex (m/f)
- ✓ Dispatch/delivery date
- ✓ Signature of recipient

4 Quantity balance

4.1 Plausibility check

4.1.1 A delivery note can be clearly assigned to each chick delivery that relates to a KAT hatch date.

4.1.2 If necessary, these delivery notes can be clearly evidenced on the basis of invoices and/or other relevant documents.

4.1.3 **[K.O.]** For each KAT hatch using an in-ovo sexing method, the hatchery can ensure and clearly prove that the incubation of the male embryos was terminated before the 13th day of incubation.

4.1.4 **[K.O.]** All hatchings relevant to the KAT system are plausibly recorded on the basis of the available documents and evidence.

4.2 Traceability

4.2.1 **[K.O.]** The establishment has a system that can be used to trace and document the identification of breeding batches and how these relate to the number of birds sold (hatching batches).

5 Animal dealers

As a general rule, every party involved in the value chain is responsible for ensuring that the separation of KAT and non-KAT birds is adhered to. This separation must be guaranteed both physically and in terms of accounting, and the required data must also be entered correctly in the KAT database.

The following chapter details requirements that apply exclusively at the stage of animal dealers.

5.1 General requirements

5.1.1 The establishment description is complete and up to date. Any changes to the establishment description are reported to the KAT Office immediately.

 *Form FB-A-01-EN_Establishment description*

5.1.2 An appropriate documented procedure is in place for loading and delivery to ensure that KAT birds cannot be mixed up with non-KAT birds.

5.2 Requirements for database reports

5.2.1 **[K.O.]** All birds in a KAT batch (m/f) are reported in the KAT database no later than three weeks after the stocking date in the respective rearing/laying farm.

5.2.2 **[K.O.]** Non-KAT batches that are delivered to a KAT member are reported in the KAT database using the KAT ID of the respective receiving farm. Only batches that are not intended for KAT members are reported using the general recipient address K000.9.

5.3 Documentation requirements

5.3.1 All relevant documents (invoices/delivery notes) are filed and kept on file for at least 12 months.

5.3.2 The delivery notes for the birds at least include the following information:

- ✓ Supplier including KAT ID
- ✓ Recipient including KAT ID
- ✓ KAT batch number
- ✓ No. of birds per KAT batch number
- ✓ Genetics
- ✓ Sex (m/f)
- ✓ Age of birds (day-old chicks or age stated in days)
- ✓ Dispatch/delivery date
- ✓ Signature of recipient

5.3.3 The KAT logo may be used as a general logo on delivery notes and invoices provided that the individual items on the delivery notes and invoices are also clearly marked as “KAT birds” or “non-KAT birds” or are exclusively KAT birds.

5.4 Plausibility check

5.4.1 A delivery note can be clearly assigned to each delivery that relates to a KAT batch.

5.4.2 If necessary, these delivery notes can be clearly evidenced on the basis of invoices and/or other relevant documents.

5.4.3 **[K.O.]** All deliveries relevant to the KAT system are plausibly recorded on the basis of the available documents and evidence.


5.5 Traceability

5.5.1 **[K.O.]** The establishment has a system that guarantees the identification of delivery batches and for tracing and documenting how these relate to the number of birds sold.

Teil III: Annex

1 Signs and symbols

[K.O.] Knock-out criteria

 *References to applicable documents*

 *Required documents/documents for submission*

2 Abbreviations

EU European Union

F Female

FB Form

K.O. Knock-out

KAT e.V. Verein für kontrollierte alternative Tierhaltungsformen

KAT ID KAT identification number

M Male

VA Procedural instruction

3 Definition of terms

Tab. 2: Definition of terms

Term	Definition/explanation
Rearing farm	Establishment in which pullets and/or cockerels from laying hybrid breeds are reared commercially
Stocks	Quantity/number of birds and goods
Hatchery	Establishment in which eggs are artificially hatched
Breeding batch	Number of hatching eggs for a given hatch incubated per day, per genetics and per process used to avoid killing of chicks
Third-party stocks	Alternative stocks from establishments/establishment sections that are not part of the KAT system and that do not have KAT certification
Cockerel flock	Name for a group of male laying hybrid chicks (<i>Gallus gallus</i>)
KAT stocks	Stocks from establishments that are KAT-compliant and are subject to a conformity assessment across all stages
Laying farm	Agricultural business that keeps laying hens for the purposes of egg production

Male laying hybrid	The male of the hybrid of the Gallus gallus species; laying hybrids are optimised for poultry farming based on hybrids and are bred specifically for their laying performance
Hatching batch	All chicks of the same sex and same laying hybrid breed subject to the same procedure to avoid killing chicks hatched on one day in a hatchery
Day hatch	All chicks, irrespective of laying hybrid breed, sex and procedure to avoid killing chicks, hatched on one day in a hatchery (00:00 to 24:00)
Animal dealer	Company that trades in and/or sells day-old chicks and/or pullets on its behalf and for its own account.

4 Applicable documents

The documents can be downloaded from the internal area of the KAT website www.kat.eu.

Applicable documents (in the currently valid version) include:

KAT documents

- ✓ KAT logo design rules
- ✓ Procedural instruction VA-B-05_ Quick Guide_Stock management_Hatchery
- ✓ Form FB-A-01-EN_Establishment description
- ✓ Form FB-A-02-EN_Emergency plan
- ✓ Form FB-B-01-DE_Hatching in henhouse notification
- ✓ KAT Crisis Management Guide for Member Establishments