

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)105

(Question Serial No. 0792)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

This question originates from: Estimates on Expenditure Volume I Page 248 (if applicable)

Question (Member Question No. 41):

Regarding the wholesale of live cattle, please advise on the following:

- (a) the total number, the average daily number, as well as the highest and lowest daily wholesale number of live cattle supplied to Hong Kong in each of the past three years (i.e. from 2011-12 to 2013-14);
- (b) the monthly average, highest and lowest price of live cattle supplied to Hong Kong in each of the past three years (i.e. from 2011-12 to 2013-14);
- (c) the total expenditure and average expenditure per head of cattle by the Government in handling live cattle (such as the arrangements for slaughterhouses, quarantine management, etc), as well as the manpower involved; and
- (d) the expenditure and manpower involved in setting up a joint working group with the Mainland last year to conduct surveys and studies on the supply of live cattle to Hong Kong, as well as the progress of the work.

Asked by: Hon. HO Chun-yin, Steven

Reply:

- (a) Information on the number of live cattle admitted to the slaughterhouse in the past three years is tabulated as follows –

Year	Total number of live cattle admitted	Daily number of live cattle admitted		
		Average	Highest	Lowest
2011	28 718	79	172	18
2012	26 032	71	161	12
2013	19 156	52	116	8

- (b) Information on the monthly wholesale prices of live cattle imported from the Mainland in the past three years is tabulated as follows –

Year	Monthly wholesale prices per picul of live cattle imported from the Mainland (\$)					
	Marbled Meat Cattle			Beef Cattle		
	Average	Highest	Lowest	Average	Highest	Lowest
2011	2,871	3,110	2,685	2,533	2,790	2,325
2012	3,601	4,310	3,110	3,291	4,105	2,790
2013	4,497	4,690	4,310	4,093	4,105	4,070

- (c) The expenditure on live food animal inspection in the slaughterhouses in 2011-12 and 2012-13 was \$24.9 million and \$27.7 million respectively and the revised estimate in 2013-14 is \$31.5 million, involving 85 staff posts in each of these three years. Pigs, cattle and goats are slaughtered in the slaughterhouses. The average expenditure of live animal inspection on each live food animal slaughtered is \$15.6, \$16.6 and \$18.6 in the same period. The cost for handling live cattle cannot be separately identified.
- (d) In view of the concerns articulated in the community about the supply and price of fresh beef, we commissioned a consultant to conduct a market survey in 2013. We have also relayed to the Ministry of Commerce the request of the general public on opening up the market of live cattle supply agents. To this end, the Ministry of Commerce convened a research seminar in November 2013 to listen to the views of the industry in Hong Kong and the Mainland on the existing system for the supply of live cattle to Hong Kong, in order to facilitate further studies on whether there is a need to reform the current system. We will continue to maintain contact and communication with the Ministry of Commerce, and inform the public as and when there is further development.

Policy matters relating to food safety, import control, and supply of live cattle are overseen and handled by a team in the Food and Health Bureau comprising a Principal Assistant Secretary and an Assistant Secretary. These officers are also tasked with other duties. Separate breakdown on the expenditure and manpower resources spent on this aspect is not available.