

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 1141)

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

Question:

With regard to pest control work, the inter-departmental Pest Control Steering Committee has convened meetings to discuss how to improve the Government's overall surveillance and response mechanism and to map out the focus of pest control work and the work plan for this year. It sets objectives in three areas: strengthening prevention, co-ordination and surveillance. In this connection, please advise this Committee of the following:

- (a) In the coming year, what are the Government's work on pest control, the objectives, the expenditure required and manpower involved?
- (b) What is the inter-departmental co-ordination work carried out by the inter-departmental Pest Control Steering Committee?
- (c) There is criticism that there is a lack of co-ordination among different departments in mosquito or rodent control work and they handle only matters under their respective purview. What measures will be taken to address the problem of lack of communication and co-ordination among departments?
- (d) There are views that the current rodent infestation rate calculated with reference to the ratio of baits bitten by rodents cannot reflect the actual rodent infestation in the community. Will the Department consider reviewing the calculation method of the rodent infestation rate and adopting multiple reference indicators (such as the number of rodent infestation complaints, the number of live rodents caught and the number of dead rodents collected) to make a comprehensive projection?

Asked by: Hon HO Chun-yin, Steven (LegCo internal reference no.: 3)

Reply:

- (a) Pest control work, such as the control of mosquito, rodent and other disease vectors, is carried out by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department). The Department carries out a series of operations including removal of water

accumulation, as well as mosquito prevention and control work at potential breeding places over the territory. Emphasis will be placed on locations in close proximity to human residences, schools, construction sites, public housing estates, hospitals, illegal cultivation sites, waterfront public and private cargo working areas, cross boundary check points, typhoon shelters and cross boundary ferry terminals. The Department adopts multi-pronged strategies for rodent disinfection in designated target areas through elimination of the survival conditions of rodents, namely food, harbourage and passages, by improving environmental hygiene, stepping up rodent disinfection and enforcement actions. Emphasis will be placed on locations at markets, municipal services buildings, hawker bazaars, typhoon shelters, lanes adjacent to food premises and other problematic spots as well as their surroundings. For effective control of other disease vectors, the prevention and control measures will be targeted at sites where the pest frequents.

The Department carries out vector surveillance programmes to monitor the distribution and seasonal variation of vector mosquitoes and rodents including vector surveillance of dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis and malaria as well as rodent infestation surveys, rat-flea surveys and ad hoc surveys on other insect pests. In response to vector-borne diseases, the Department also conducts vector surveys in surrounding areas of all locations visited by the patients. The Department will continue to step up public education and publicity as well as provide support and technical advice to other departments on mosquito and rodent prevention and control. It also provides training to staff of other departments to enhance their knowledge and skills in pest control.

The Department has been proactively applying technologies in the provision of pest control services. Dedicated staff will be assigned to explore technologies for trial use with a view to assessing their applicability and effectiveness before putting them to use in the territory.

The estimated expenditure on pest control services for 2019-20 is \$681 million. About 700 departmental staff and 1 800 contractors' staff are deployed to pest control services.

- (b) The major role of the Pest Control Steering Committee (PCSC) is to set directions for both Government's pest control work as well as involvement of the community and the private sector in pest control efforts. The PCSC also maps out the focus of pest control work for members. It has set objectives in 3 areas for 2019, namely strengthening prevention, coordination and surveillance.
- (c) Pest control work is carried out by Government departments in areas under their respective purview to facilitate timely and effective implementation of prevention and control measures. The PCSC provides a platform for members to grasp the latest situation of pest problems, report on their progress, work plan and difficulties encountered as well as to enhance co-ordination and effectiveness of such work, including promoting joint pest control operations, sharing best practices and strengthening contract management. At the district level, inter-departmental meetings are held to ensure sufficient communication between departments so as to strengthen the Government's overall surveillance, response mechanism, deployment and formulate strategies for mosquito and rodent prevention and control work in a systematic manner.

- (d) Since 2000, the Department has been making use of the Rodent Infestation Rate (RIR) and its trend to gauge the general situation of rodent infestation in individual districts and as the basis for devising rodent prevention and control measures and assessing the overall efficacy of rodent prevention and disinfestation work. The RIR reflects the extensiveness of rodent distribution within the survey locations during the survey period. It may not fully reflect the actual situation of rodent infestation in the individual locations. When conducting rodent prevention and control operations, the Department makes appropriate adjustments to the work in individual districts from time to time, taking into consideration reports from front-line staff and the views of the relevant District Councils and the local community, as well as the results of the Rodent Infestation Survey.

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