

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)134

(Question Serial No. 1142)

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:

Under this Programme, it is stated that 93 815 poison treatments of rodent infestation in building blocks were conducted in 2018, representing a substantial increase over the figure of 70 121 in 2017, and that 60 432 rodent trappings were recorded in 2018, representing a substantial increase over the figure of 54 438 in 2017. Please advise this Committee of the following:

- (a) In the past 3 years, how many rodents were caught through poison treatments or trappings? How many rodent complaints were received? Please provide the information with a breakdown by district.
- (b) Has the Department evaluated the cost-effectiveness and constraints of these methods?
- (c) Is there any plan to introduce new methods for catching rodents? How cost-effective will they be and what are the constraints? If there is such a plan, please give the details.
- (d) It was reported in the media that contractors used freshness bags to contain the baits, which would become more difficult for rodents to bite, thus creating a false impression of zero rodent infestation. Did the Department receive any complaints of this kind and how such a situation was handled? Does the Department has a mechanism to supervise the rodent control work performed by contractors? Will it consider inviting a third party to monitor the situation of rodent infestation and the contractors' rodent control work?

Asked by: Hon HO Chun-yin, Steven (LegCo internal reference no.: 4)

Reply:

- (a) The information sought is provided at Annex I.

- (b) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) has adopted an integrated approach to the prevention and control of rodents through cleansing, enforcement, publicity and public education as well as rodent elimination by poisonous baiting and trapping. Such an approach is premised on the recommendations and technical guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO) and is in line with that adopted by the Mainland and other countries, like Malaysia, Singapore as well as those in Europe and North America. The Department will continue to keep in view the methods of disease vector surveillance, prevention and control recommended by WHO and adopted by other countries. We keep an open mind on adopting or trying out methods that are suitable for use in local circumstances for further improving the effectiveness of our rodent infestation survey, as well as prevention and control work. The Department will also continue to enhance rodent control work and launch district-specific rodent control measures, including anti-rodent operations at designated target areas, publicity and educational programmes to promote greater community involvement, in addition to the regular pest control work and annual territory-wide publicity campaigns.
- (c) The Department is studying different methods and technologies to improve the rodent surveillance and control work. Details are provided at Annex II.
- (d) Since rodenticides are toxic, they should be handled with care. In practice, rodenticides should be packed in thin plastic bags punched with holes so that rodents may detect the bait, before being placed at selected areas. The thin plastic bag can prevent the bait pellets from being scattered and provide some protection from moisture.

The Department has received some complaints against contractors' staff applying rodenticides in sealed plastic bags. District staff are reminded to keep close monitoring on the performance of service contractors in accordance with the terms and conditions of service contracts as well as the guidelines on the application of rodenticides, and to take appropriate contract enforcement actions whenever necessary.

Members of the public may raise suggestions or lodge complaints on the services provided by the Department through various channels. The Department will follow up the cases, conduct surprise inspections and carry out follow-up investigations in response to complaints. Since November 2018, the Department has assigned dedicated staff to step up surprise inspections of cleansing and pest control services to better monitor the quality of services provided by its outsourced service contractors.

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District	2016		
	Number of rodents trapped	Number of rodents poisoned	Number of rodent infestation complaints received
Central and Western	1 534	1 910	881
Wan Chai	803	1 278	534
Eastern	910	2 625	650
Southern	430	697	145
Yau Tsim Mong	2 304	2 944	1 235
Sham Shui Po	642	2 299	996
Kowloon City	1 202	1 749	810
Wong Tai Sin	314	413	277
Kwun Tong	280	2 025	490
Kwai Tsing	289	433	215
Tsuen Wan	1 216	707	354
Tuen Mun	278	525	361
Yuen Long	499	1 920	550
North	274	979	275
Tai Po	1 081	973	268
Sha Tin	663	695	382
Sai Kung	225	617	337
Islands	248	1 188	278
Overall	13 192	23 977	9 038

District	2017		
	Number of rodents trapped	Number of rodents poisoned	Number of rodent infestation complaints received
Central and Western	1 689	1 932	871
Wan Chai	584	1 241	691
Eastern	871	2 407	765
Southern	438	708	189
Yau Tsim Mong	2 391	3 176	1 247
Sham Shui Po	1 330	2 848	1 181
Kowloon City	1 491	2 322	865
Wong Tai Sin	296	720	343
Kwun Tong	448	2 213	477
Kwai Tsing	344	496	254
Tsuen Wan	1 399	817	347
Tuen Mun	88	415	354

District	2017		
	Number of rodents trapped	Number of rodents poisoned	Number of rodent infestation complaints received
Yuen Long	735	2 084	795
North	466	1 203	306
Tai Po	938	1 254	346
Sha Tin	704	800	530
Sai Kung	252	513	358
Islands	240	1 185	331
Overall	14 704	26 334	10 250

District	2018		
	Number of rodents trapped	Number of rodents poisoned	Number of rodent infestation complaints received
Central and Western	1 763	1 890	992
Wan Chai	805	1 622	909
Eastern	890	2 398	884
Southern	439	713	171
Yau Tsim Mong	2 364	3 217	1 199
Sham Shui Po	2 241	3 853	1 381
Kowloon City	1 666	2 592	1 128
Wong Tai Sin	413	1 441	338
Kwun Tong	819	2 434	487
Kwai Tsing	520	408	336
Tsuen Wan	1 631	823	376
Tuen Mun	128	503	411
Yuen Long	602	1 654	892
North	464	1 034	387
Tai Po	585	771	352
Sha Tin	703	858	696
Sai Kung	231	480	381
Islands	240	1 183	343
Overall	16 504	27 874	11 663

1. Night-vision camera : By installing a night-vision camera with artificial intelligence (AI) capable of identifying rodents at locations where they are rampant, it is possible to analyse the extent and severity of the rodent problem, e.g. the density of rodents and their movements. Targeted measures may be formulated accordingly to control and kill rodents. Information and data provided by the night-vision camera surveillance system may also help analyse and assess the effectiveness of the rodent control measures.
2. Thermal imaging cameras : The Department has engaged a technology company to use thermal imaging cameras and develop an AI system for rodent surveillance.
3. Nara Bloc and Spray : Nara Bloc is a new product that contains non-poisonous bait claimed to have better attractiveness to rodents. It may be used as bait for census baiting, e.g. Rodent Infestation Survey (RIS). Nara Spray may be applied to rodenticides and rodent traps to increase their attractiveness to rodents in order to achieve better poisoning and trapping effects.
4. Rodent trapping devices driven by pressurised gas (A24) : It is a trapping device using compressed carbon dioxide gas for driving a striker to kill rodents that touch the trigger when trying to access the lure set inside the device. The trap clears and resets automatically after each firing.