

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)079

(Question Serial No. 1380)

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:

It is mentioned in the Estimates that the Government will take forward initiatives to enhance pest control services to strengthen response to communicable diseases and vector surveillance programmes. In concluding its experience of implementing the six-month territory-wide cleansing campaign last year, the Department pointed out that 10 000 live rodents had been caught, more than 5 000 rat holes filled and 12 000 dead rodents collected during the period. The number of rodents caught has significantly increased, but confirmed cases of rat hepatitis E virus were still reported in January 2020. Please advise this Committee of the following:

1. What are the details of the initiatives to be taken forward in the coming year to enhance pest control services?
2. The Department mentioned that it was studying the use of thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence analytical function for monitoring the areas and extent of rodent activities and that field trials would be conducted in Kowloon City early this year. What is the latest progress of the work?
3. The Department indicated that it would carry out improvement works or clearance work at back alleys where there were hygiene problems. Please set out in detail the locations where the relevant measures were carried out in the past year, with a breakdown by district.

What is the specific work plan for carrying out improvement works or clearance work at back alleys where there are hygiene problems in the coming year? Please set out the locations where the relevant measures will be carried out in the coming year, with a breakdown by district.

Asked by: Hon CHENG Wing-shun, Vincent (LegCo internal reference no.: 21)

Reply:

1. Regarding the enhancement of pest control services, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department adopts an integrated approach to the prevention and control of mosquitoes and rodents. Such approach is mainly premised on the recommendations and technical guidelines of the World Health Organization.

In 2020, the Department will continue to carry out a series of anti-mosquito operations that mainly include removal of water accumulation, as well as mosquito prevention and control work in mosquito breeding places and potential mosquito breeding places over the territory. Emphasis will be placed on the surrounding areas of residential buildings, schools, construction sites, hospitals, illegal cultivation sites, waterfront public and private cargo handling areas, cross boundary check points, typhoon shelters, cross boundary ferry terminals, etc. Moreover, new mosquito trapping devices that are proved effective in field tests will be applied in the appropriate environments. The Department conducts an inter-departmental anti-mosquito campaign in 3 phases annually. Apart from stepping up mosquito control measures, education and publicity work will also be strengthened. In particular, members of the public will be reminded to eliminate the mosquito breeding places. After the first phase and the second phase of the anti-mosquito campaign, the Department will conduct special thematic mosquito prevention and control operations in the territory to enhance the effectiveness of the anti-mosquito campaign. In addition, the design of the new ovitrap has been finalised. Starting from April 2020, the Department will place around 5 000 new ovitraps in the territory to calculate directly the number of adult mosquitoes. Apart from the existing ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus*, the Department will also release the adult mosquito density index to better reflect the effectiveness of mosquito control work and facilitate various departments to formulate more targeted anti-mosquito measures.

For rodent control, the Department adopts multi-pronged strategies and carries out anti-rodent operations in designated target areas through elimination of the 3 survival conditions of rodents, namely food, harbourage and passages, by improving environmental hygiene, stepping up rodent disinfestation 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. Apart from the routine anti-rodent work, the Department conducts a territory-wide and inter-departmental anti-rodent campaign in two phases annually, with a view to stepping up rodent prevention and control in designated target areas and reminding the public of the importance of rodent prevention and control. The Department will also conduct two rounds of the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas in the territory, each lasts about 8 weeks, in May and November 2020 respectively. The measures to be taken include elimination of food sources and hiding places of rodents as well as blocking their passages, so as to keep the areas clean. The Department will step up public education and publicity during the anti-rodent operations and arrange health talks for building managers of private buildings, persons-in-charge of food premises, and operators of market and hawker stalls, etc. to provide information and technical advice on rodent prevention and control.

2. The Department is conducting studies on thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence analytical functions for monitoring the areas and extent of rodent

activities. Initial trial results have shown that the data captured can quantify and assess the effectiveness of anti-rodent work by directly comparing the rodent population density before and after carrying out anti-rodent operations. The technology can be used for identifying potential rodents' entry points, travel routes and areas they frequently visit, so that rodenticides and trapping devices can be placed in a more effective manner and more targeted rodent control measures can be implemented. The Department conducted field trials in early 2020 in order to assess the feasibility of quantifying rodent surveillance. It plans to install cameras before and after anti-rodent operations in individual designated target areas in May with a view to quantifying and reviewing the effectiveness of the operations.

3. Since May 2019, the Department has deployed additional manpower and equipment for street cleansing in various districts to step up inspection and clearance of rear lanes with a view to keeping the areas clean. During the territory-wide cleansing campaign launched between May and November 2019, the 21-day year-end clean-up operation commenced in late December 2019 and the clearance operation conducted in target rear lanes in February 2020, the Department mounted a total of 6 864 rear lane clearance operations. The number of clearance operations with a breakdown by district is set out at the Annex. Moreover, the Department has installed Internet Protocol (IP) cameras at more than 150 illegal refuse dumping blackspots (including rear lanes) over the territory since August 2019 to combat illegal refuse dumping and improve environmental hygiene. In 2020-21, the Department will continue to step up inspection of rear lanes and arrange for dedicated rear lane cleansing teams to clear refuse and waste. It will also revise the action plans as appropriate according to the actual circumstances, including relocation of IP cameras, so as to keep the areas clean and enhance the effectiveness of enforcement actions.

Rear lane clearance operations conducted between 2019 and February 2020

District	No. of clearance operations in rear lanes
Central and Western	35
Wan Chai	301
Eastern	1 138
Southern	966
Yau Tsim	659
Mong Kok	296
Sham Shui Po	217
Kowloon City	856
Wong Tai Sin	472
Kwun Tong	50
Kwai Tsing	110
Tsuen Wan	595
Tuen Mun	75
Yuen Long	182
North	216
Tai Po	459
Sha Tin	70
Sai Kung	95
Islands	72
Total	6 864

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