

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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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 stated that the Department will enhance pest control services, particularly in respect of mosquitoes and rodents. Please advise on the progress of the work in 2019, as well as the specific work plans and timetables, estimated manpower and resources required in 2020.

Asked by: Hon LEE Kok-long, Joseph (LegCo internal reference no.: 34)

Reply:

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 2019, the Department invited an expert in mosquito prevention and control from the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Western Pacific and an expert in rodent control introduced by WHO to visit Hong Kong to provide advice on mosquito and rodent control work. In the same year, the number of mosquito breeding places eliminated was 65 795, the number of poison treatments of rodent infestation in building blocks was 98 322, the number of rodent trappings was 68 490, and the total number of dead rodents collected and live rodents caught was 53 986.

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.

The Department has provided a new mosquito trapping device to relevant departments and organisations (including the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Housing Department, the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority) for trial use from September 2019. The new mosquito trapping device has achieved noticeable results, leading to a substantial reduction in the adult mosquito population. Various departments will use this technology more widely. Before March 2020, around 2 700 new mosquito traps will be deployed in areas under their purview with a view to preventing mosquito breeding before the onset of rainy season.

In May 2019, the Department launched a territory-wide keep clean campaign together with other relevant government departments, targeting areas such as rear lanes, housing estates, food premises and markets. During the campaign, cleansing work and enhanced enforcement actions were carried out and public education and publicity in this regard were also strengthened. Other departments have already carried out enhanced cleansing and anti-rodent work.

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 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. 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 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.

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.

In 2020-21, the Department's estimated expenditure on pest control services is \$667 million. About 740 in-house staff and 2 040 staff engaged by the contractors will provide pest control services.

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