

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)131

(Question Serial No. 2974)

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 Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2020-21, it is mentioned that the Department will take forward initiatives to enhance pest control services. In this connection, please advise on the following:

In the past year, how many rodent infestation complaints were received and handled by the Department? What were the numbers of dead rodents collected, live rodents caught and rat holes filled? What were the manpower and expenditure involved? Please provide the information in tabular form with a breakdown by administrative district.

What anti-rodent methods did the Department employ in the past 3 years? What were the rodent trapping devices used? What were the quantity and cost of the equipment? How effective was the anti-rodent work?

What are the results of the baseline study conducted by the Department in Kowloon City District in January this year? What is the timetable for extending the baseline study to all districts in Hong Kong with a view to establishing a quantifying new rodent infestation surveillance mechanism?

The Department has stated that it is preparing for the use of thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence analytical functions for monitoring the areas and extent of rodent activities. What are the details as well as the manpower and expenditure to be involved?

Asked by: Hon QUAT Elizabeth (LegCo internal reference no.: 63)

Reply:

Information on rodent complaints received and handled by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in 2019 is tabulated as follows:

District	Number of rodent complaints received and handled
Central and Western	1 074
Wan Chai	988
Eastern	818
Southern	112
Yau Tsim Mong	1 161
Sham Shui Po	1 200
Kowloon City	952
Wong Tai Sin	357
Kwun Tong	556
Kwai Tsing	295
Tsuen Wan	311
Tuen Mun	458
Yuen Long	776
North	485
Tai Po	344
Sha Tin	711
Sai Kung	372
Islands	359
Overall	11 329

In 2019-20, the revised estimated expenditure of the Department on rodent control services was \$207.1 million. The total number of in-house staff responsible for pest control work and the total number of staff engaged by pest control service contractors in 2019 was 727 and 1 970 respectively. In 2019, the Department filled 12 963 rat holes, collected 30 259 dead rodents and caught 23 727 live rodents. There is no separate breakdown on the dead rodents collected, live rodents caught and rat holes filled as well as the manpower and expenditure involved in handling rodent complaints.

The Department has been adopting multi-pronged strategies including improving environmental hygiene, rodent disinfestation and enforcement action to combat rodent problem. The integrated approach adopted by the Department in rodent prevention and control by improving environmental hygiene, complemented with poisonous baiting and trapping is based on the recommendations and technical guidelines of the World Health Organization. The trapping device used by the Department is the rodent cage trap and the poisonous baits are anticoagulants. In 2019, the Department conducted a test on a rodent trapping device driven by pressurised gas. The unsuccessful trapping showed that the device was not so effective as the rodent cage trap. The expenditure involved in conducting the test was about \$60,000.

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. Also, 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 has been conducting further field trials in Kowloon City District since 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 this year with a view to quantifying and reviewing the effectiveness of the operations. The estimated expenditure involved in conducting the trials is about \$2.1 million and the manpower involved will be absorbed by existing resources.

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