

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)306**

**(Question Serial No. 4558)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department  
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified  
Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services  
Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)  
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

With regard to African Swine Fever (ASF), please advise this Committee of the following:

- (1) Since the outbreak of ASF, how many food samples have been taken for ASF virus testing? Please set out in tabular form with a breakdown by food type the number of food samples taken, the places of origin of the food products sampled, the number of unsatisfactory samples detected, the quantity of food products recalled and the number of days required for conducting tests on food samples.
- (2) Please list the number of cases involving seizure of smuggled pork by the Department at various border control points since the outbreak of ASF. Has manpower been stepped up to combat pork smuggling at border control points? Please advise on the departments involved and the manpower situation.
- (3) What are the Department's corresponding actions for the ASF epidemic? Please advise on the departments and the manpower and expenditure involved.

Asked by: Hon KWOK Ka-ki (LegCo internal reference no.: 139)

Reply:

- (1) African Swine Fever (ASF) is not a zoonotic disease and there are no food safety concerns. However, to prevent the spread of ASF in Hong Kong, the Government will collect samples from pigs for testing of ASF under the current inspection mechanism once suspected cases are found. Positive test results have been announced by the Government on 10 May, 31 May and 3 September 2019.
- (2) From August 2018 to February 2020, the Customs and Excise Department referred 492 cases of suspected illegal import of pork intercepted at border control points to the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department for follow-up action and more than 2 000 kg of pork was seized for disposal. CFS has ensured that proper manpower is deployed at border control points to safeguard food safety at the

import level. As at March 2020, there are 108 officers from the Food Import and Export Section of CFS on shift duty at various border control points.

(3) Since the first ASF outbreak on the Mainland in August 2018, the Government has been closely monitoring the development of the epidemic to stay alert and implement preventive measures accordingly. Each consignment of food pigs is subject to import inspection upon arrival in Hong Kong and must be accompanied by a valid animal health certificate issued by the Mainland authority attesting that the animals are clinically healthy and originate from a registered farm recognised by the General Administration of Customs, People's Republic of China. Live pigs will also undergo health inspection by veterinary officers at the control point. Besides, transportation trucks are disinfected before admission to the animal inspection station. All pigs admitted into the slaughterhouses must pass ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection before they are supplied to the market. When suspected ASF cases are found, inspection officers at the control point or the slaughterhouses will follow the existing inspection mechanism to take samples for testing of ASF by the Veterinary Laboratory of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department.

To enhance bio-security and prevent the spread of the ASF virus, cleansing and disinfection within the slaughterhouses (including incoming and outgoing vehicles and personnel, the lairages and the pig slaughtering lines) have also been strengthened. In addition, a daily clearance arrangement has been implemented in Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse and Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse since 6 June 2019, whereby live pigs will be slaughtered within 24 hours upon admittance into the slaughterhouse. Under the new arrangement, lairages in different areas of the slaughterhouse will be cleared and thoroughly cleansed and disinfected every day. Since the period of stay for pigs in the slaughterhouses is short, and the slaughterhouses are fully cleansed and disinfected daily, the risk of ASF spreading in Hong Kong is significantly reduced.

Apart from quarantine, CFS has enhanced publicity on ASF through various channels, including broadcasting messages on the radio, displaying posters at border checkpoints, MTR trains and escalators, placing advertisements in newspapers and on the Internet, and adding posts on social media such as the Facebook, with a view to reminding the public that while ASF is not a zoonotic disease related to food safety, pork must be cooked thoroughly before consumption. CFS also makes use of simple and easy-to-understand infographics and short videos to conduct publicity on social media to facilitate the public in learning about ASF.

The revised estimate of expenditure on managing slaughterhouses and providing meat inspection services in 2019-20 was \$57.92 million, involving the expenditure for 66 posts. The cost for handling ASF cannot be separately identified.

The revised estimate of expenditure on live food animal inspections and quarantine detector dog services at boundary control points and in slaughterhouses in 2019-20 was \$68.10 million, involving the expenditure for 143 posts in CFS. The cost for handling ASF cannot be separately identified.

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