

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)168

(Question Serial No. 1200)

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 Diane WONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Rodent infestation was serious in Kwun Tong and Wong Tai Sin in the past 3 financial years. Owing to the current outbreak of COVID-19 epidemic in the territory, public awareness of environmental hygiene has been enhanced. However, rodent activities are still detected in various districts. Members of the public are concerned that rodent infestation may lead to the spread of diseases in the community. In this connection, please advise this Committee of the following:

- (1) How many anti-rodent operations were conducted in the 18 districts in the territory in the past 3 financial years?
- (2) What were the manpower and financial resources allocated by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) in tackling the rodent problem in each of the 18 districts in the territory in the past 3 financial years?
- (3) Many citizens complained that the rodent problem was still serious in Shui Wo Street Market, Wo Lok Estate, Kwun Tong and Wong Tai Sin, and they were doubtful about the effectiveness of the rodent control measures. Has the Department assessed whether the current manpower and financial resources are sufficient in tackling the rodent problem, and whether the rodent control measures are out-dated?
- (4) What are the manpower and financial resources to be allocated by the Department in tackling the rodent problem in the new financial year? Will the Department consider expanding the existing establishment or setting up a dedicated section to tackle the rodent problem? If yes, please provide the details, including the manpower and estimated expenditure.

Asked by: Hon TSE Wai-chun, Paul (LegCo internal reference no.: 13)

Reply:

- (1) In the past 3 calendar years, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department conducted a “territory-wide anti-rodent campaign” in two phases annually in various

districts, with a view to enhancing public awareness on the importance of rodent control and encouraging active public participation in anti-rodent work. To step up rodent control in various districts, the Department launched the “anti-rodent operations in designated target areas”, which lasted about 8 weeks, in various districts after the two phases of the “territory-wide anti-rodent campaign”. Multi-pronged strategies, including environmental hygiene improvement, rodent disinfestation and enforcement actions, were adopted to strengthen rodent prevention and control.

- (2) The overall expenditure on the provision of pest control services by in-house and outsourced staff in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 was \$630 million, \$663 million and \$726 million (revised estimate) respectively. In 2018, 2019 and 2020, the total number of in-house staff responsible for pest control work was 699, 727 and 740 respectively and the total number of outsourced staff providing pest control services was about 1 860, 1 970 and 2 180 respectively. Rodent control work is part of the routine duties of the District Environmental Hygiene Offices of the Department. The Department does not have a separate breakdown on the manpower and expenditure involved in the relevant work in different districts.
- (3) The Department has all along adopted an integrated approach to rodent prevention and control through cleansing, disinfestation, enforcement, publicity and public education. Such approach is premised on the recommendations and technical guidelines of the World Health Organization and is in line with the anti-rodent approach adopted by the Mainland and other countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, as well as those in Europe and North America. The direct disinfestation approach adopted by the Department mainly includes the setting of rodent cage traps and the application of poisonous baits that have been tested and proved effective. The Department is gradually implementing the advice of an expert in rodent control introduced by the World Health Organization by placing various kinds of food as baits at a time to raise the effectiveness of rodent traps, using a type of new snap trap, promoting active participation in rodent prevention and control work in the community and exploring the application of various technologies on baits and traps. Moreover, the Department exchanges experience in rodent control work with the relevant organisations and experts of other countries/cities from time to time to explore anti-rodent measures and technologies.
- (4) In 2021-22, the estimated expenditure on pest control services of the Department is \$769 million. About 740 in-house staff and 2 200 staff of the contractors will be engaged in the provision of pest control service.

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