

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)014

(Question Serial No. 0109)

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 (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

In this Programme, it is stated that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will introduce night rodent control operations in all districts, and continue to take forward other initiatives to enhance pest control services, particularly in respect of mosquitoes and rodents, to strengthen response to vector-borne diseases and vector surveillance programmes. In this connection, please advise this Committee of:

- a) the effectiveness of the operations conducted in the past year; and
- b) the specific plan, preparation work as well as resources and manpower required for conducting the operations in the coming year, and the expected results to be achieved.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Kin-por (LegCo internal reference no.: 7)

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 2021, mosquito infestation in Hong Kong was under control. In the year, the territory-wide mosquito surveillance index during the rainy season was at a relatively low level similar to the levels of the past years, and there was no local dengue fever case in Hong Kong. As regards rodent infestation, the overall Rodent Infestation Rate (RIR) for 2021 was 3.1%, which improved as compared with the 3.6% in figure 2020. The number of survey locations that recorded an RIR reaching Level 2 (i.e. rodent infestation was slightly extensive) also decreased from 7 in 2020 to 3 in 2021.

In addition, the number of mosquito breeding places eliminated was 72 012, the number of poison treatments of rodent infestation in building blocks was 109 685, the number of rodent trappings was 86 164, and the total number of dead rodents collected and live rodents caught was 67 182.

In 2022, the Department will continue to carry out a series of pest control operations. For mosquito control, the Department will, in collaboration with the relevant departments, continue to remove water accumulation and carry out 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 will be applied in the appropriate environments. Large robotics ultra-low volume (ULV) foggers that can be mounted on vehicles will be introduced to facilitate the killing of adult mosquitoes in places that are difficult for workers to reach. The Department will conduct a territory-wide anti-mosquito campaign in 3 phases. 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.

To enhance the effectiveness of adult mosquito control, the Department has, in collaboration with the relevant departments, conducted all-out anti-mosquito operations. Efforts have been focused on eliminating potential mosquito breeding places before the rainy season. The Department has also called on other government departments and private property management companies to carry out maintenance of the premises early to minimise the chances of hatching of mosquito eggs. ULV fogging treatment will be conducted regularly once the rainy season commences.

For rodent control, the Financial Secretary announced in the 2022-23 Budget Speech that a total additional funding of \$500 million would be allocated within two years for the Department to enhance environmental hygiene services, including stepping up measures on rodent control in response to the epidemic, and to strengthen inspections and enforcement actions to raise the community's awareness about hygiene. To help step up anti-epidemic efforts, the Department will continue to take multi-pronged rodent prevention and control measures. Emphasis will be placed on locations at markets, municipal services buildings, hawker bazaars, typhoon shelters, lanes adjacent to food premises, other spots with more serious rodent infestation, etc. Meanwhile, the Department will optimise the use of additional funding to implement night rodent control operations in all districts. Rodent trappings will be employed in the small hours to strengthen the work on rodent prevention and control at rodent black spots in the districts.

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. Moreover, it will conduct two rounds of anti-rodent operations in designated target areas in the territory, each lasts 8 weeks, in May and October 2022 respectively. The measures to be taken mainly include elimination of food sources and hiding places of rodents as well as blocking their passages, so as to keep the community clean and hygienic. In addition, 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. During the first round of operations in 2022, the Department will carry out an enhanced version of the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas in Central and Western, Southern, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon City, Tsuen Wan and Tai Po Districts, so as to expand the scope of rodent control to cover more rodent black spots, including those in public markets and municipal services buildings, hawker bazaars and rear lanes adjacent to food premises, and conduct large-scale and targeted anti-rodent operations. Meanwhile, the Department will continue to strengthen the application of thermal imaging cameras during anti-rodent operations to detect rodent activities in all designated target areas across the territory. Analysing the rodent traces detected at different stages of the operations will help various district offices to devise an appropriate anti-rodent strategy.

On rodent surveillance, the Department will continue to strengthen follow-up actions. It will carry out intensive rodent prevention and control work in survey locations recorded with an RIR of 8% or above, and conduct a re-assessment in one month's time to monitor the rodent infestation situation and the effectiveness of the rodent control work. In survey locations where a high RIR is subsequently recorded, the thermal imaging camera surveillance system will be deployed to facilitate the deployment of rodent control operations in identifying hotspots of rodent activities for targeted control actions and evaluating the effectiveness of such operations.

The Department will also continue to step up data sharing with other departments. In addition to the release of results of individual survey locations to the relevant departments by e-mail, the Department has also released detailed rodent infestation data recorded in each survey location covered by the Rodent Infestation Survey (RIS) to other departments through the Government's Geospatial Information Hub to facilitate the preparation of various departments to carry out targeted anti-rodent operations in the venues within their purview. In 2020, the number of survey locations covered by the RIS increased from 41 to 50. Since the second quarter of 2020, the Department has released the RIR of all 50 survey locations to the public and uploaded the maps showing the areas covered by the survey locations to enable members of the public to have a better understanding of the rodent infestation situation of particular locations and take effective rodent prevention and control measures.

In 2022-23, the estimated expenditure on pest control is \$751 million. About 750 in-house staff and 2 200 staff engaged by the contractors will provide pest control services.

- End -