

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 (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Rodent infestation is serious in the urban areas and the problem has existed for a long time without improvement. How does the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department determine the criteria for placing baits and traps to improve the current situation? How effective is it? Studies have found that rodents may spread viruses such as the COVID-19 and cause epidemics. Will the Department formulate plans to control rodent infestation? What plans and arrangements are in place to tackle the problem?

Asked by: Hon KONG Yuk-foon, Doreen (LegCo internal reference no.: 10)

Reply:

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department adopts an integrated management approach to the prevention and control of rodent infestation with reference to the recommendations and technical guidelines of the World Health Organization. Besides, the Department reviews and enhances various vector surveillance programmes and pest control measures from time to time with a view to strengthening the prevention and control of vector-borne diseases. At present, the Department assesses the rodent infestation situation in various districts by referring to sources such as the Rodent Infestation Survey, complaints about rodent infestation, views of local communities and the public, as well as routine inspections conducted by frontline staff. The Department's staff assess the areas and extent of rodent infestation of individual locations by observing on-site the signs of rodent infestation, such as rodent droppings, gnawing marks and rat holes, so as to determine the quantities and locations for application of baits and setting of traps. In addition, the Department has introduced a thermal surveillance system with artificial intelligence function to gauge in a more precise manner the rodent activities at individual locations where rodent infestation is more serious, so as to facilitate the planning of targeted rodent prevention and disinfection work.

In 2021, the Department conducted 109 685 poison treatments of rodent infestation in building blocks and used 86 164 rodent trappings; the total number of dead rodents collected and live rodents caught was 67 182. The overall Rodent Infestation Rate (RIR) for the year was 3.1%, which improved as compared with the 3.6% figure in 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.

Furthermore, 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. The Department will continue to strengthen rodent prevention and control work in public places and conduct targeted street cleansing and disinfection when necessary.

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