

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 0660)

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 Environment and Ecology

Question:

It is stated under the Programme that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will continue to implement and trial new measures to enhance and sustain the effectiveness of its rodent control work, including continuing with the night rodent operations and trial use of new rodent control technologies and tools, etc. In this connection, please advise this Committee of:

- 1) the effectiveness of anti-rodent work in 2022-23 and whether the situation of rodent blackspots has improved;
- 2) whether the relevant operational plans will be reviewed and more effective measures be introduced in the coming year, and their expected effectiveness; and
- 3) whether the Department will look into and enhance the work strategy of its Pest Control Section in order to take more proactive actions to tackle rodent infestation effectively.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Kin-por (LegCo internal reference no.: 21)

Reply:

- 1) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has stepped up rodent control work since the establishment of the current-term Government, and its efforts have borne fruits. In 2022, the Department continued to carry out the territory-wide anti-rodent campaign and anti-rodent operations in designated target areas. 19 overnight rodent control teams were set up in July 2022. New technologies, tools and baits were put into use, including a wider application of T-shaped bait boxes. A trial scheme was launched in November 2022 to allow licensed food premises to place large-size waste containers at rear lanes for temporary storage of waste until collection by the cleaning workers they hired. The Code of Practice for Rodent Management and Checklists for Anti-rodent Work were formulated for use by relevant stakeholders. With the use of a multi-pronged approach, the total number of dead rodents collected and live rodents caught by the Department from July to December 2022 was 42 114, around 20% more than that of January to June 2022 (35 118), and around 18% more than that in the corresponding

period in 2021 (35 812). The number of live rodents caught has remarkably increased since the formation of overnight rodent control teams. The number of live rodents caught during the second half of 2022 was 27 728, an increase of around 57% over that in the first half of the year (17 694), and around 50% more than that in the corresponding period in 2021 (18 459).

Targeting rodent problems in markets and fixed-pitch hawker areas, the Department has continued to implement deep cleaning operations in public markets and extended the intensive anti-rodent operations to all markets and fixed-pitch hawker areas. Between August and December 2022, a total of 8 026 dead rodents and live rodents were removed from public markets, around 56% more than that in the corresponding period in 2021 (5 156).

Since late 2022, strategic anti-rodent operations are being conducted in over 100 priority rodent blackspots. More resources are deployed to improve the rodent infestation situations in these areas in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. The Department puts in place large-scale and targeted rodent control and prevention measures in the relevant blackspots, which include not only placing rodenticides and trapping devices but also filling rat holes, sweeping and washing streets and rear lanes, removing rubbish and junk, etc., in order to eliminate the harbourage, food and passages of rodents. The rodent prevention and control work by the Department has achieved initial success. As at 31 December 2022, the situations of most of the priority rodent blackspots had improved. The Department will continue to monitor the latest situations of the priority rodent blackspots closely and adopt suitable measures to step up cleansing, inspection and law enforcement, so as to achieve the indicator set in the 2022 Policy Address, that is, to reduce the number of priority rodent blackspots at least by half by end-2023.

2&3) The Department reviews the effectiveness of its rodent control work in a timely manner, and studies and tries out new rodent prevention and control strategies to enhance the effectiveness of such work. The rodent prevention and control measures to be adopted by FEHD in 2023-24 include:

- (a) continuing with the night rodent operations in all districts to enhance the effectiveness in capturing rodents;
- (b) continuing to use new technologies, tools and baits, including wider application of T-shaped bait boxes at suitable locations, piloting the use of alcohol rodent trapping device in more public markets and refuse collection points and introducing glue traps to some public markets and indoor facilities with more serious rodent infestation, as additional rodent control methods;
- (c) engaging 3 contractors to carry out a 3-month project to assess the rodent infestation, draw up anti-rodent strategies and carry out anti-rodent work in Shek Tong Tsui Market in Central and Western District, Shui Wo Street Market in Kwun Tong and Heung Che Street Market in Tsuen Wan respectively, with a goal to bring in the latest and most effective anti-rodent strategies and methods;
- (d) extending the current trial scheme in phases after review to allow more food premises to place large-size waste containers in rear lanes and requiring such

premises to strengthen rodent control, so as to improve the environmental hygiene and tackle the rodent problem in rear lanes;

- (e) stepping up public education and publicity and reminding the public of the importance of rodent control, including organising the School Cleaning Video Production Competition in collaboration with the Education Bureau to further enhance students' awareness of environmental cleanliness and strengthen their understanding of rodent control;
- (f) continuing to arrange health talks for building managers of private buildings, persons-in-charge of food premises, operators of market and hawker stalls, etc. to provide them with information and technical advice on rodent prevention and control; and
- (g) exploring ways to improve the existing methodology of rodent surveillance and conducting trials on the use of thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence function for detecting rodent activities at individual survey locations. The aim is to assess the feasibility of formulating a more representative new Rodent Infestation Rate (RIR) to progressively replace the existing RIR, so as to better reflect the rodent infestation situation of the survey locations and facilitate the planning of anti-rodent operations at blackspots.

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