

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**EEB(F)115**

**(Question Serial No. 2576)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has introduced night rodent operations in all districts, and continues to take forward other initiatives to enhance pest control services, particularly in respect of mosquitoes and rodents, to strengthen response to vector-borne diseases. In this connection, please advise this Committee of:

- 1) the effectiveness of the pest control operations conducted in the past year;
- 2) 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; and
- 3) whether the Department will allocate more resources for the anti-mosquito work in Ma On Shan, given the relatively high mosquito surveillance index in the area.

Asked by: Hon LAM So-wai (LegCo internal reference no.: 36)

Reply:

- 1) As far as mosquito control is concerned, the mosquito infestation situation remained under control in 2022. The overall trend of the Gravidtrap Index for *Aedes albopictus* throughout the year was similar to that of 2021. The relatively higher indices recorded in June and July 2022 were likely attributable to the exceptionally high rainfall in May.

With regard to rodent control, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has stepped up rodent control work since the establishment of the current-term Government, and its efforts have borne fruits. In 2022, FEHD 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 FEHD 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, FEHD has continued to implement deep cleaning operations in its 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).

- 2) In 2023, FEHD will continue to carry out a series of pest control operations. For mosquito control, FEHD conducts the territory-wide Anti-mosquito Campaign in 3 phases each year, usually around February to October. A territory-wide thematic mosquito prevention and control special operation is also launched between the phases, which focuses on enhanced mosquito control work at strategic areas with more serious mosquito infestation, such as construction sites, etc.

To further enhance the effectiveness of mosquito control efforts, FEHD also conducts All-out Anti-mosquito Operations each year in collaboration with the relevant bureaux/departments from around March and April until the end of the rainy season. The operations focus on eliminating potential breeding places in venues under the management of the relevant bureaux/departments, especially through repairing structural defects such as defective floor and surface channels, etc. Regular fogging operations are also carried out to suppress the density of adult mosquitoes in the venues under their respective management.

With regard to rodent control, the Environment and Ecology Bureau launched the Cross-sectoral Territory-wide Anti-rodent Action (the Action) on 28 December 2022 to encourage different sectors in the community (including the pest control trade, property management companies, operators of market and hawker stalls, the catering industry as well as the construction industry) and members of the public to collaborate with the Government in anti-rodent work and enhance public awareness of rodent control.

FEHD takes a proactive role in the Action. Apart from continuing to step up the routine rodent control work, FEHD also studies and tries out new rodent prevention and control strategies to enhance the effectiveness of its anti-rodent work, and keeps on providing support and advice on rodent control for the relevant departments and industries. Specifically, 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 three-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.

In addition, strategic anti-rodent operations are being conducted against over 100 priority rodent blackspots. More resources are devoted to improving the rodent situations in these areas in a comprehensive and sustainable manner, striving 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.

745 in-house staff and 2 175 staff engaged by the contractors provide pest control services, including rodent and mosquito control services. In 2023-24, the total estimated expenditure on pest control services is \$797 million.

- 3) Every week, the Sha Tin District Environmental Hygiene Office (Office) of FEHD carries out routine environmental improvement measures at public places in the district.

Such measures include removal of fallen leaves and accumulated water at the roadside, clearing of fallen leaves and refuse in surface drainage channels, and application of larvicides to gullies and ditches. Moreover, the Office installs additional new mosquito trapping devices and use ultra-low volume foggers to conduct fogging operations at suitable places in Ma On Shan to reduce mosquito breeding and the population of adult mosquitoes. It also maintains close communication with the relevant departments and management offices of housing estates, providing them with professional advice and technical guidance from time to time, so as to facilitate the adoption of effective measures for mosquito prevention and control in the areas under their management. Noting the relatively high gravidtrap index in the area, the Office has offered advice and technical guidance to the relevant departments and management offices of private housing estates, assisting them to implement effective anti-mosquito measures swiftly. Besides, site inspections have been conducted in collaboration with the relevant departments and members of the local community to check the effectiveness of the anti-mosquito efforts. Publicity and education have been strengthened.

From May to July 2022, the Area Gravidtrap Index for *Aedes albopictus* (AGI) recorded in Ma On Shan area exceeded the alert level of 20%. Accordingly, the Office carried out a total of 513 fogging operations and eliminated 548 mosquito breeding places. Moreover, a total of 6 prosecutions were instituted against persons committing the offence of causing mosquito breeding, and 115 cases were referred to the relevant departments/stakeholders for follow-ups. Under the concerted efforts and collaboration of various departments, the AGI of Ma On Shan area had gradually declined since June 2022 and stayed below the alert level from August 2022 to end-2022. The Office will continue to adopt various targeted measures to keep mosquito breeding and the population of adult mosquitoes under control.

- End -