

Acting SFH speaks on mosquito preventive work in schools

The Acting Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi, appealed to schools to take mosquito preventive measures and to guard against dengue fever when he visited a school in Wong Tai Sin this afternoon (August 24) before the start of the new school year. Following is Dr Chui's remarks at a media session:

Reporter: In terms of the suggestion that the schools should hire supervisors to supervise their mosquito control measures, will the Government provide any sort of support for those schools which intend to hire such supervisors?

Acting Secretary for Food and Health: Today, we visited one of the schools in Wong Tai Sin area. We understand this school has already assigned a staff designated to supervise their front-line workers and also the pest control company they have hired to do the pest control job. I think this layer of supervision is very important to ensure the quality of service provided, either by the front-line cleaners or the contractors. As demonstrated earlier on, the task to be provided is relatively simple, for example, cleaning the drains, blocking the keyholes in the drain covers and also emptying the plant trays. I think the key point is having another layer of supervision. Adding another layer of supervision would enhance quality. That is the main message.

Reporter: In the Wong Tai Sin District Council meeting this morning, some asked if there will be any, like, task force to monitor and tackle the problem.

Acting Secretary for Food and Health: The Government has already established a cross-bureau, cross-department Pest Control Steering Committee, which I chair. We had in fact two meetings in the past one week focusing on the discussion on how to enhance the control of the dengue condition over the territory and with the co-operation and also the collaboration and intensify the efforts of all the concerned departments. In that meeting, there were three bureaux involved and also 18 departments. Members of the steering committee are also high-ranking officials to ensure what we have discussed will have actual implementation in the relative departments. So I think we will use that platform as a cross-department collaboration and also execution of all measures that we want to implement to control the dengue condition.

Reporter: Would you describe the situation as losing control? And, to what extent will the Government implement a blockade on Cheung Chau?

Acting Secretary for Food and Health: We are closely monitoring the number of affected cases every day. As of now, you know, there are 23 confirmed cases of local dengue fever. We will keep very close monitoring of the condition and as I said before, the effort or focus that we must do now is to enhance the anti-mosquito measures in the affected areas. As I said, the most

effective measure is to control the spread of the disease by the insect vector. So, we have a special protocol under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department colleagues to have fogging exercise for the locations where the affected individuals are living or have travelled during the incubation period and that intensive effort will last for over a month. We will continue with that. Another level of control exercise is through the 18 districts. We have the all-out operation and in that operation we will collaborate with local communities, for example, the District Council, headmasters' associations, that sort of local community. And with that effort, we hope to identify the risk areas where we can prioritise our effort and do our anti-mosquito measures effectively.

Reporter: Some said that the measures of tackling the problem are a bit outdated. So will the Government use some new technologies to tackle the issue?

Acting Secretary for Food and Health: I think it is important to embrace technology in many aspects of the issues under the Food and Health Bureau. Pest control, in particular dengue fever control, is one of the areas now everybody in Hong Kong is paying attention to. So we will actively employ and also welcome suggestions from all parties in the community to advise or give suggestions on how we can incorporate modern technology in the detection or the monitoring of mosquito conditions in Hong Kong.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)