

AFCD conducts exercise to test avian influenza outbreak response (with photos)

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (November 5) carried out an exercise to review the preparedness of the AFCD and other departments in case a poultry culling operation is required in response to an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Hong Kong.

About 150 staff members of the AFCD, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, the Civil Aid Service and the Jockey Club College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences of the City University of Hong Kong took part in the exercise, codenamed "Anthurium", to familiarise themselves with the work procedures of the operation, including procedures for wearing and removing protective gear as well as the disinfection and disposal of carcasses, and to test the response plans.

The Under Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi, and the Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (Inspection & Quarantine), Dr Thomas Sit, were also on-site to view the drill. A field command centre and a mock chicken farm were set up at the exercise venue for participants to simulate their front-line duties, including mobilising staff and resources, setting up different operation areas in the mock chicken farm, and following personal biosecurity guidelines when entering and leaving the mock chicken farm.

An AFCD spokesman said that avian influenza has occurred from time to time in different parts of the world, so Hong Kong should stay vigilant at all times. The exercise can ensure that relevant departments are well prepared to execute the contingency plan effectively in case a culling operation in Hong Kong is necessary. The Government will continue to implement the prevention and control measures, and urged the poultry trade and the general public to remain vigilant and help guard against avian influenza viruses.

In addition, the Government will enhance surveillance before the winter season. These measures include conducting surprise inspections targeting local poultry farms and pet bird shops, the collection of more samples from the wholesale poultry market for tests on avian influenza, and enhanced actions to combat the illegal import of live birds at boundary control points.

The AFCD has notified the World Organisation for Animal Health of the exercise.

