

[AFCD keeps monitoring coral bleaching in Hong Kong \(with photos\)](#)

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said today (July 30) that the department recently noted coral bleaching in Hong Kong waters. The AFCD will keep monitoring the situation with experts and follow up as appropriate.

The spokesman said, "The AFCD received reports of coral bleaching in Hong Kong waters in mid-July and subsequently conducted surveys and investigations. Different levels of coral bleaching were found in some coral communities. According to water monitoring data taken by the AFCD in a coral community at Tung Ping Chau Marine Park, the average water temperature in the past month was about 2 degrees Celsius higher than the same period last year. It is believed that the symbiotic zooxanthellae could have been expelled from corals due to the rise in water temperature during the summer in Hong Kong, and this is associated with the cause of coral bleaching."

The AFCD has liaised with coral experts of relevant local universities to discuss the coral bleaching situation in Hong Kong waters, and co-ordinated coral monitoring work, which involved sending staff from the AFCD and two universities to conduct fast surveys in major coral communities, in order to understand the overall situation of coral bleaching. The AFCD will continue to monitor and assess the health condition of the coral communities concerned and formulate follow-up measures depending on actual circumstances.

The spokesman noted that coral communities are highly productive habitats and support a high diversity of marine life. According to records of the AFCD and past observations of experts, corals in Hong Kong are relatively resilient and will normally regain health and continue to grow when water temperatures in Hong Kong waters resume the normal level. Members of the public should avoid disturbing coral communities during water activities, such as reducing human disturbance to bleaching coral communities and not stepping on or touching corals during snorkelling or diving, in order to provide a healthy environment for corals.

The AFCD has been promoting a series of measures and programmes for the conservation of corals in Hong Kong, including the designation of marine parks and marine reserves, the organisation of education and publicity activities to enhance public understanding of the importance of coral communities, the annual Hong Kong Reef Check to monitor the status of coral communities in Hong Kong, and the study and implementation of mitigation measures to restore degraded coral communities.

The spokesman urged members of the public to report coral bleaching to the AFCD for follow-up through the department's Coral Bleaching Sighting Report in Hong Kong system: www.jotform.com/form/200558542131447.

