

Anti-rodent work continues to be stepped up (with photo)

The interdepartmental Pest Control Steering Committee met today (November 15) to review the effectiveness of the work under the territory-wide cleaning operation since May 20. To sustain the effectiveness of anti-rodent work, various departments agreed to strengthen the relevant work until February next year. Meanwhile, owing to the first confirmed local dengue fever case recorded this year in early November, the departments also discussed areas to be strengthened when carrying out anti-mosquito work next year.

Various departments briefed the meeting on the progress of anti-rodent work in all 18 districts.

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has collected 11 617 dead rodents, caught 9 349 live rodents and filled 5 102 rat holes from May 20 to November 10. The FEHD has stepped up rodent control work in various districts. In comparison with the figure in May, the number of live rodents caught in October has increased by 27 per cent and the number of complaints received has dropped by 48 per cent. Between January and October this year, the FEHD caught 19 106 live rodents and filled 10 831 rat holes, whereas in the same period last year, 13 264 live rodents were caught and 7 698 rat holes were filled, representing an increase of around 40 per cent.

The FEHD conducted a special operation targeted at irregularities of food premises such as food preparation, scullery, improper storage of articles and illegal disposal of refuse in back alleys. Between May 20 and November 10, a total of 552 summonses, 801 Fixed Penalty Notices, 1 059 Notices to Remove Litter/Waste and to Clean Areas, 3 100 advisory letters, 1 778 verbal warnings, 13 warning letters and five Nuisance Notices were issued. The FEHD issued some 4 900 summonses targeted at illegal activities by food premises between January and August this year, more than some 4 100 summonses issued in the same period last year. The prosecution figures this year are expected to increase by 20 per cent compared with those of last year.

The FEHD has conducted a three-month intensive anti-rodent operation in Lei Wan Market, Ap Lei Chau Market and Kam Tin Market since mid-July. Speedy refuse removal and cleaning of all drains in the markets have been carried out every night after the stalls are closed to eliminate rodents' food sources. Traps have also been placed extensively. The department is now concluding its experience and will adjust future operations in view of the ground situation.

The Highways Department has completed 240 improvement work items of different scales in various back alleys, including repairing road surfaces or surface channels as well as local repaving.

The Housing Authority (HA) has conducted cleaning operations to strengthen cleaning and pest control work in public rental housing (PRH) estates since June. The operation will last until late November. The HA has already completed examination and reinforcement of rodent-proofing structures installed in more than 180 PRH estates in October. These works included installation of 6 500 additional rodent guards at suitable locations of external walls and pipes of buildings in the PRH estates with reference to suggestions from the FEHD.

The Buildings Department and the Architectural Services Department have promulgated guidelines on incorporating rodent-proofing design in new private buildings for building professionals' reference. The FEHD held a seminar in November to facilitate better understanding of the guidelines by building professionals.

In addition, the FEHD held 202 health talks for personnel of private property management companies and persons-in-charge of food premises. Eight talks on pest control were also held for government cleaning service contractors and staff of private property management companies.

In terms of the focus of anti-rodent work ahead, the Highways Department will locally repave back alleys with poor environmental hygiene conditions taking into account the community's feedback. It is initially estimated to involve more than 30 back alleys. The HA will review and further decide on the priority PRH estates with reference to the estate situation, and will also continue to review and reinforce rodent-proofing facilities, if needed, in PRH estates. Currently, the HA has implemented additional measures in 50 priority PRH estates to step up cleaning and pest control work as well as to strengthen implementation of the Marking Scheme for Estate Management Enforcement. The FEHD will learn from its past experience and adjust future operations depending on the ground situation. The department will carry out intensive rodent control operations in three additional public markets, and will also continue to strengthen enforcement actions.

The FEHD has been putting on trial thermal and night-vision cameras with artificial intelligence functionality to monitor the extent of rodent activity since April. The department will continue to examine the feasibility of using these cameras for rodent surveillance. It is planned to use the relevant technology on trial for assessing the effectiveness of anti-rodent work when carrying out anti-rodent operations in designated target areas next year. The FEHD invited a British expert, by recommendation of the World Health Organization, to Hong Kong in November to inspect rodent control work. The Government will make reference to the advice provided by the expert and continue to make reference to overseas experience on anti-rodent work.

Regarding anti-mosquito work, in view of the success of the territory-wide All-out Anti-mosquito Operations this year, various departments agreed to continue this year's modus operandi, eliminate breeding grounds early and commence fogging operations simultaneously before the onset of the rainy season next year. Various departments also reviewed the pest control work

items which needed to be strengthened next year. These include constant updating of black spots for carrying out fogging operations to facilitate deployment and clearance of mosquito breeding places in rainy seasons.

In respect of mosquito control techniques, departments and organisations including the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Housing Department and the Department of Health as well as the Hospital Authority have conducted field trials of a new mosquito trap design in Ma On Shan and Sheung Shui since September. The trap has been effective by using female mosquitoes as the media, while an insect growth regulator will be disseminated to different water bodies to prevent mosquito larvae from hatching into adults.

Before the onset of the rainy season next year, the Government will put in place a sufficient quantity of new mosquito traps in suitable locations as needed to strengthen mosquito control work. Moreover, the FEHD will continue to put on trial ovitraps with modified design to calculate the density of adult *Aedes albopictus* directly. Next year, the department will adopt the new design territory-wide and provide the public with the data on adult mosquito density. ¶¶¶¶

Representatives from three bureaux and 20 departments/organisations attended today's meeting.

