

April's monthly ovitrap index for Aedes albopictus rises

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (May 15) announced that the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for April rose to 5.4 per cent from 1.1 per cent in March, indicating that although the infestation of *Aedes albopictus* in the areas surveyed was not extensive, there was an upward trend. The FEHD reminded the public to carry out effective prevention and control measures against mosquitoes as the summer weather will help mosquitoes breed quickly.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "*Aedes albopictus* is a kind of mosquito that can transmit dengue fever (DF) and Zika virus. In view of the 29 local DF cases recorded in Hong Kong last year and the high prevalence of DF in neighbouring areas, and that Hong Kong's hot and rainy summer is conducive to large-scale mosquito breeding within a short period of time, the community must stay vigilant and work with the Government to carry out effective mosquito control measures."

Among the 57 areas surveyed last month, positive ovitrap indices were recorded in 54 areas, ranging from 0.9 per cent to 20.6 per cent, with the index of Tseung Kwan O North ranked the highest, exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent. As for the port areas, the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for April also rose to 0.8 per cent from 0.01 per cent in March.

The spokesman said, "The FEHD has conducted anti-mosquito operations at locations where a positive index was recorded. Additionally, an inter-departmental anti-mosquito response mechanism has been activated in the area with the Area Ovitrap Index (AOI) reaching the alert level for co-ordinating relevant departments and stakeholders to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures. Relevant departments have also individually notified the groups that had voluntarily subscribed to the ovitrap rapid alert system. Subscribers have been invited to post specially designed alert notices in the common parts of their premises to urge occupants and staff to carry out mosquito prevention and control measures promptly."

To eliminate early the potential breeding places for mosquitoes ahead of the rainy season, the FEHD and relevant government departments have already launched All-out Anti-mosquito Operations last month. The major measures include carrying out fogging in scrubby areas within a 100-metre radius around residences weekly to kill adult mosquitoes; carrying out inspection, removing stagnant water, applying insecticide and disposing of abandoned water containers weekly to prevent mosquito breeding; and trimming of grass to discourage resting of adult mosquitoes on the site. The FEHD and relevant government departments will continue the above mosquito prevention and control work in areas under their purview, particularly in the area with AOI reaching the alert level, and strengthen publicity and education campaigns in the coming months.

In addition, the FEHD started the second phase of its Anti-mosquito Campaign last month which lasts until June 14. The district offices of the FEHD have targeted areas which have drawn particular concern, such as public markets, cooked food centres and hawker bazaars, single-block buildings, streets and back lanes, common parts of buildings, village houses, construction sites, vacant sites and road works sites, and stepped up publicity at those places as well as mosquito prevention and control work at relevant public places. The FEHD will, after the second phase of the campaign, conduct territory-wide thematic mosquito prevention and control special operations to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign.

The FEHD has also handled mosquito complaints promptly and taken out prosecutions under the relevant ordinance against mosquito breeding. The Pest Control Inspection Teams have stepped up inspection of construction sites and enforcement action against mosquito breeding. This year (as at May 10), the FEHD instituted 41 prosecutions for mosquito breeding found in relevant premises under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), comprising 39 cases involving construction sites and two cases involving other premises.

In order to keep the public abreast of the latest situation of mosquito infestation and assist them to take timely mosquito prevention and control measures, the FEHD is releasing two additional phased AOI for *Aedes albopictus* before the announcement of the monthly AOI and the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus*. The FEHD will follow the established practice of notifying relevant government departments of the aforementioned indices so that they can carry out targeted mosquito prevention and control work promptly to strengthen the anti-mosquito efforts.

The spokesman added that as *Aedes albopictus* breeds in small water bodies, members of the public should carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures, including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing all the water in vases and scrubbing the inner surface as well as removing the water in saucers under potted plants at least once a week, properly disposing of containers such as soft drink cans and lunch boxes, and drilling large holes in unused tyres. He also advised the public and estate management bodies to keep drains free of blockage and level all defective ground surfaces to prevent accumulation of water. They should also scrub all drains and surface sewers with an alkaline detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

In addition, rural areas and the vicinity of shrubby areas are the natural habitats for mosquitoes, other insects and animals. Members of the public living in rural areas may install mosquito screens on windows and doors if necessary. Those staying in the natural environment should follow appropriate personal protective measures against mosquitoes, such as avoiding staying in the vicinity of shrubby areas for a long time, wearing light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers and applying DEET-containing insect repellent. Members of the public are reminded to make reports to the government departments via 1823 if mosquito problems are detected.

The spokesman reiterated that effective mosquito control requires the sustained effort of all parties concerned. The community must work together with the Government to carry out effective mosquito control measures.

The ovitrap indices for *Aedes albopictus* in different areas and information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on the department website at www.fehd.gov.hk.