

LCQ18: Working dogs under the various government departments

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 29):

Question:

At present, some foreign governments have made arrangements about the use of working dogs by government departments, such as work conditions (e.g. weekly working hours), retirement ages and the protection for post-retirement living. Regarding the working dogs under the various government departments, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the government departments which currently use working dogs to perform duties, and set out the numbers of dogs by name of government department;
- (2) of the details of the guidelines formulated by the various government departments on the use of working dogs to perform duties;
- (3) of the details of the duties performed by working dogs under the various government departments;
- (4) of the general weekly working hours for working dogs under the various government departments;
- (5) whether the various government departments have set retirement ages for their working dogs; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (6) of the relevant expenditures incurred on and manpower deployed for managing working dogs by the various government departments in each of the past five years;
- (7) of the numbers of working dogs euthanised in each of the past five years, and the reasons for that;
- (8) of the current number of retired working dogs; whether the Government has provided them with support in their living (e.g. medical services); if so, of the details and the relevant expenditure in each of the past five years; if not, the reasons for that; and
- (9) given that the Government plans to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169) to impose a "duty of care" on persons responsible for animals to look after their animals well, whether the Government will bring dog handlers of the various government departments within the scope of regulation; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted other departments, the Food and Health Bureau's reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) to (4) Currently, six government departments, namely the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), Customs and Excise Department (C&ED), Correctional Services Department (CSD), Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), Fire Services Department (FSD) and Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), have set up working dog units, assisting officers of the departments in performing various duties pertaining to the maintenance of law and order and the protection of public safety. These include quarantine and inspection, narcotics interdiction, search operation, investigation and patrol. The number of working dogs in the six departments is tabulated below:

	AFCD	C&ED	CSD	FEHD	FSD	HKPF
Number of working dogs	11	68	67	7	6	121

Having regard to the duties of its working dogs and the actual circumstances, each department has formulated guidelines for managing and taking care of its working dogs, covering the scope of their daily duties, meal arrangements, rest schedules, management of their rest stations and their retirement plans. Working dogs of AFCD, C&ED, CSD, FEHD and HKPF work three to eight hours a day in general. Working dogs of FSD are responsible for providing support in fire investigation and assisting in the search for trapped victims or missing persons in rubble or mountainous areas during rescue operations. Given the special nature of their duties, FSD's working dogs and their respective dog handlers work on a "24 hours on, 24/48 hours off" shift system on a team basis.

(5) The above-mentioned departments have drawn up retirement plans for their working dogs. Depending on the health conditions of individual working dogs and the veterinary advice, a working dog usually retires at the age of eight to nine.

(6) The average annual expenditures (including the salaries of dog handlers and supervisors, dog food and medical expenses) and the manpower involved in managing working dogs for the above six departments over the past five years are as follows:

	AFCD	C&ED	CSD	FEHD	FSD	HKPF
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Average annual expenditure (\$0,000)	250	2,180	1,210	240	230	/(Note)
Average annual manpower involved (number of staff)	12	66	28	6	6	146

Note: HKPF does not keep a breakdown of the expenditure on the management of police dogs.

(7) On average, three working dogs were euthanised by veterinary surgeons due to serious illness in each of the past five years.

(8) In general, handlers of working dogs will have priority over others when applying for adopting the retired working dogs. However, not every handler is able to adopt the dog due to personal reasons or constraints of his/her living environment. Some of the retired dogs are adopted by interested parties, subject to the assessment of the relevant department. Working dogs awaiting for adoption or those that are not adopted will be arranged to live their full span in the relevant departments. In the past five years, there were a total of 213 retired working dogs in the above six departments. The Government does not keep a breakdown of the expenditure involved in keeping retired working dogs.

(9) The Government is now consulting the public on proposals for strengthening the protection of animal welfare, including imposing a duty of care on a person responsible for an animal. As the persons responsible for their working dogs, dog handlers in the relevant departments also have the responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare needs of their dogs are met. We will finalise the details of the proposals in the light of the views received during the consultation period.

[Speech by CE at 2nd HKEx Biotech Summit \(English only\) \(with photo/video\)](#)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the 2nd HKEx Biotech Summit this morning (May 29):

Laura (Chairman of the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEx), Mrs

Laura M Cha), Charles (Chief Executive of HKEx, Mr Charles Li), distinguished speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I'm pleased to join you here today for the second edition of HKEx Biotech Summit.

Based on the huge success of the first edition last year, I was told that HKEx has expanded the scale of the event this year. This second Summit is part of the inaugural HKEx Biotech Week. More than 1 000 related professionals – from biotech and pharma companies, to biotech investors and analysts, regulators, academics, health-related big-data companies and more – are here in Hong Kong this week from the Mainland and from all over the world. Let me first extend to all of you a very warm welcome. Hong Kong is now the world's second largest funding hub for biotech. I naturally hope to see one day we will become the world's number one. Hong Kong was ranked the world's freest economy by the Heritage Foundation and the Fraser Institute for many years, and more recently, Hong Kong took the global first position in terms of economic openness assessed by the Legatum Institute in its inaugural index. And Hong Kong stayed firmly as the world's number two in terms of competitiveness according to IMD's World Competitiveness Yearbook 2019 released yesterday. The same strengths in the rule of law, judicial independence, rights and freedoms as well as the favourable business environment and international connectivity that win us those laurels are equally conducive to the biotech industry development in Hong Kong. But I realise we need to adopt more specific measures.

Innovation and technology (I&T) is, therefore, at the top of my Government's policy agenda. In less than two years since I took office, we have invested some HK\$100 billion or US\$13 billion, rolling out a variety of ground-breaking measures to fast-track our I&T sector and showcase it to the world. These measures range from infrastructure to talent admission, from the Government's own technology venture fund to providing super tax deductions for companies' R&D expenditure. Within the HKSAR Government, technology is now embraced through adopting a pro-innovation government procurement policy, opening up public data for research, encouraging departments to apply technology more aggressively. I am personally chairing a steering committee to ensure that these I&T initiatives are effectively implemented.

Biotechnology is one area of I&T in which Hong Kong enjoys notable strengths. We're blessed with world-class universities, with four of them ranked among the world's top 60. We have two world-renowned medical schools, ranked amongst the world's top 50. They offer strong research capabilities in biotech, and they have vast experience and networks for creating partnerships with prominent universities, research institutions and technology-based companies from all over the world. This is evident from our recent work in the establishment of two world-class research clusters at the Hong Kong Science Park, our flagship technology centre.

The establishment of these two research clusters, one on healthcare and the other on artificial intelligence and robotics, is one of our major initiatives announced last year to further enhance Hong Kong's research

capabilities. The idea is to converge top-notch universities and researchers from all over the world here in Hong Kong to conduct world-class and impactful collaborative researches with our local institutions. I am pleased to say that the response to date has been encouraging. We have received close to 50 proposals, with more than half of them on healthcare technologies. They involve really top-notch institutions from around the world. We expect that the first research institutions will be setting up their laboratories here before the end of this year.

My Government also funds biotech R&D through our Innovation and Technology Fund. At the end of January, more than 500 projects related to biotech had been approved by the Fund, receiving funding totalling about US\$130 million. Project areas range from stem-cell therapy and molecular diagnostics to the modernisation of traditional Chinese medicine and biopharmaceutical manufacturing.

We are also opening up government data to encourage R&D. One important data source is our Hospital Authority. As the major provider of public healthcare services in Hong Kong, the Hospital Authority serves around 90 per cent of in-patient needs and around 30 per cent of outpatient services in Hong Kong. Armed by its strong database with more than 280 terabytes of patient data accumulated over 25 years, the Hospital Authority is establishing a Big Data Analytics Platform to stimulate biotechnology research. It has recently set up a Data Collaboration Laboratory on a pilot basis, offering more flexible and interactive data sharing through the Hospital Authority.

We are also playing an increasingly important role in conducting human clinical trials. Over the years, the Department of Health has put in place various facilitation measures to promote Hong Kong as a clinical trial hub, including streamlining and simplifying the application procedures and by providing advice throughout the application process. We also have strong support from the Mainland authorities in this regard. At present, the National Medical Products Administration of China recognises clinical trials data from over 30 specialties at the Queen Mary Hospital, the Prince of Wales Hospital, the Hong Kong Eye Hospital and the Hong Kong Sanatorium and Hospital for the purpose of drug registration in China. This enables Hong Kong to serve as a platform for local and multinational pharmaceutical companies to venture into the Chinese market. The Government, including myself, will actively promote Hong Kong to pharmaceutical companies. Indeed, since I took office in July 2017, I have already met the senior management of a number of pharmaceutical companies, including Roche, Merck, GSK and Novartis. If there are other pharmaceutical companies in the audience, you can just give me a ring and I'm happy to meet.

We are strengthening our co-operation with the Mainland authorities in this regard. Earlier this month, our Food and Health Bureau has signed a co-operation agreement with the National Medical Products Administration of China on regulation of drugs. The two parties will be in regular dialogue to explore collaboration in such areas as clinical trial and the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Apart from clinical trial, we are working hard in the area of genomic medicine. Genomic medicine is an important sphere in contemporary medicine and scientific research, with huge potential in screening, diagnosis and precision medicine. To seize the potential, we established in late 2017 a Steering Committee on Genomic Medicine chaired by Professor Raymond Liang to lead the study on strategies for developing genomic medicine in Hong Kong.

We have also decided to allocate about HK\$1.2 billion to take forward a large-scale genome sequencing project, which would be named the Hong Kong Genome Project. The project will cater for future medical development in Hong Kong by establishing the genome data of the local population, testing infrastructure and talent pool. We aim to perform 40 000 to 50 000 whole genome sequencing in the next six years. The pilot phase would cover undiagnosed disorders and cancers, with clinical clues linked to possible hereditary genetic components. We have set up a working group comprising experts from the clinical, academic and research sectors to finalise the relevant framework.

To ensure that we have the needed talent to sustain our I&T development, we have been providing and promoting science and technology education in our schools at every level, from primary and secondary through to our post-secondary institutions and technical colleges. We have also launched admission schemes to help our enterprises recruit talent from the Mainland and overseas.

Our universities, our research capability and our talent that I mentioned just now will make Hong Kong a very good R&D centre, but for Hong Kong to become an international I&T hub, we need to provide an enabling environment for the transformation of R&D results and for entrepreneurship. It is exactly what we are trying to do here in Hong Kong.

It helps that our financial market is among the world's most competitive. Hong Kong's free-enterprise economy and business-friendly environment also play a critical role in creating an attractive and enabling environment. The depth and liquidity of our capital market ensure that the I&T sector's financing needs can easily be met. With a market capitalisation of more than US\$4 trillion, and proximity to the Mainland, our financial market offers great value to biotech investors and entrepreneurs. When it comes to IPO funds raised, HKEx has ranked first globally in six of the past 10 years. Last year, we raised US\$36.6 billion through IPOs, while total funds raised exceeded US\$69 billion.

The biotech industry has distinct approval mechanisms for turning research into commercial products. That can make it challenging for biotech companies to meet the traditional revenue and cash-flow requirements for listing on the securities market. With that in mind, the HKEx conducted a thorough review to help biotech companies list in Hong Kong without compromising investor protection. That led, in April 2018, to revised listing rules which enable pre-revenue and pre-profit biotech companies to list on the HKEx, subject to appropriate safeguards. HKEx also established a biotech

advisory panel to provide advice on listing applications from biotech companies.

The new listing regime is the most significant revamp of our listing rules in two decades. The ultimate goal, of course, is to encourage research breakthroughs that lead to successful products and flourishing businesses, rewarding investors as well as the biotech companies, while boosting Hong Kong's status as a biotechnology centre.

I'd say we're on our way. At the end of last month, that is one year after the launch of the new listing regime, seven pre-revenue and pre-profit biotech companies had listed on the HKEx, raising some US\$2.8 billion through IPOs. They are part of the 40 new economy companies listed in Hong Kong in the past year. We are all very encouraged by the market reaction, and I look forward to more and more biotech companies joining us in the future. With the Government's strong commitment, and with the staunch support of HKEx and all of you here, I am sure the best is yet to come for biotech and overall I&T development in Hong Kong.

After all, creating connections, helping people, businesses and institutions excel, is what Hong Kong has long been celebrated for. It's why you're here for today's HKEx Biotech Summit.

My thanks to HKEx for organising today's Summit and the Biotech Week. I wish you all a very rewarding Summit and the best of business in 2019. Thank you very much.



[LCQ20: Incidents of pigs in slaughterhouses infected with infectious diseases](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai and a written reply by

the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 29):

Question:

Immediately upon confirming on the afternoon of the 10th of this month that African Swine Fever (ASF) virus had been found in a pig sample from Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (SSSH), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) announced that all pigs in SSSH would be culled. In addition, the operation of SSSH was suspended for more than one week for thorough cleansing and disinfection. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that ASF is transmitted only among pigs and does not infect humans, nor does it pose a food safety risk, of the measures the Government took in the past and will take in future to publicise this message among members of the public, so as to maintain public confidence in pork consumption;

(2) whether it will, after duly consulting stakeholders, establish a compensation mechanism in respect of such kind of incidents; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it has studied how the process of cleansing and disinfection of SSSH can be expedited in future, with a view to shortening its closure period as far as practicable; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it has summed up the experience gained from this incident for formulating a standard practice for handling similar incidents in future; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

(1) Since the first African Swine Fever (ASF) case occurred on the Mainland in August 2018, the relevant government departments have been widely disseminating information to the public and stakeholders about the prevention of ASF, including the messages that ASF will not be transmitted to humans and well-cooked pork is safe for consumption, through different means and channels such as government websites, announcements in the public interest, radio soundtracks, and social media platforms etc. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has also enhanced publicity by putting up posters in MTR train compartments and at various control points, as well as disseminating information via social media to promote the message that it is an offence to carry raw meat into Hong Kong without a health certificate.

(2) Under the existing mechanism, each pig culled will be compensated by the Government according to the market price of its type. We will liaise with the trade on the details of the compensation arrangement.

(3) and (4) The Government declared the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (SSSH) as an infected place after a pig sample collected therein was tested positive for ASF virus on May 10, 2019 and carried out thorough cleansing and disinfection after culling all the pigs kept therein to prevent the virus from spreading beyond the SSSH. This is the general international practice in handling ASF infected places.

The cleansing and disinfection work carried out at the SSSH was conducted after clearance and completed smoothly on May 18 with the concerted efforts of the slaughterhouse operator and relevant stakeholders. In the light of this experience, FEHD will continue maintaining dialogue with the trade to fine-tune the process in the future with a view to shortening the closure period of the slaughterhouse as far as practicable.

In addition, we will review the existing preventive measures and contingency plans for controlling ASF, and identify any areas for improvement in future, in view of this incident.

LCQ8: Provision of government canteens at boundary control points

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (May 29):

Question:

Quite a number of staff members of the various disciplined services have relayed to me that only a Hong Kong-style café, a convenience store and a takeaway shop selling Japanese rice balls, but no government canteen, are provided in the Passenger Clearance Building at the Hong Kong Port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. As many types of the food items provided at the Hong Kong-style café are expensive and often sold out, and the lunch break is not long enough for disciplined services staff members working there to travel by car to other places for lunch, they often skip their meals, thus affecting both their health and work performance. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the names of the boundary control points (covering air, land and sea travel) currently provided with government canteens; and

(2) of the considerations and criteria adopted for determining the provision or otherwise of government canteens at boundary control points; whether it will consider providing a government canteen in the aforesaid Passenger Clearance Building; if so, of the anticipated commissioning date; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question is as follows:

(1) At present, there are government canteens at the boundary control points at Shenzhen Bay, Lok Ma Chau Spur Line, Lok Ma Chau, Man Kam To, Lo Wu and Sha Tau Kok. A government canteen will also be set up in the Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point to be completed soon.

(2) To ensure the optimal utilisation of government resources, canteens are not normally provided in government buildings according to the Accommodation Regulations. If a department considers that there is a genuine need and proposes to set up a canteen in a government building, the Property Vetting Committee (PVC), which comprises members of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the Architectural Services Department and the Government Property Agency, will consider the proposal having regard to the relevant factors and criteria, including whether there is any practical alternative means to provide meals for the staff other than the proposed canteen.

There are currently one restaurant and two takeaway food shops at the Passenger Clearance Building at the Hong Kong Port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) to serve passengers and the staff working at the Port. Before the commissioning of the HZMB control point, the Government has made a special arrangement so that the restaurant would provide discounted menus at designated hours for selection by government staff working in the Passenger Clearance Building. The Government has also designated a dining room for the exclusive use of these staff.

After the commissioning of the Hong Kong Port of the HZMB, the relevant bureau/departments have proposed to set up a canteen, having regard to the actual operation of the Port and the dining needs of the staff, for the exclusive use of government staff. The PVC is considering the proposal in accordance with the established policy and in the light of the actual circumstances.

Red flags hoisted at some beaches

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (May 29) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Stanley Main Beach,

Turtle Cove Beach, Shek O Beach and Big Wave Bay Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.