

## Drop recorded in July's monthly ovitrap index for Aedes albopictus

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (August 15) announced that the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for July dropped to 10.2 per cent from 16 per cent in June. Although the index has declined and is lower than that for the same period last year, members of the public should continue to take effective prevention and control measures against mosquitoes to reduce the risk of the spread of mosquito-borne diseases in the territory.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "*Aedes albopictus* is a kind of mosquito that can transmit dengue fever (DF) as well as the Zika virus infection. In view of the 29 local DF cases recorded last year and the warning from the World Health Organization that the number of DF cases recorded in Asian countries this year was exceptionally high when compared with last year, and that Hong Kong recorded a local case of Japanese encephalitis in June and the hot and rainy weather of summer is favourable for massive mosquito breeding, the community must work with the Government to continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures. When travelling overseas, particularly to dengue endemic areas, measures should be taken to prevent mosquito bites."

The spokesman said, "The FEHD and relevant government departments are very concerned about mosquito infestation and they launched the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations throughout the territory in April. The major measures include carrying out fogging in scrubby areas within a 100-metre radius around residences weekly to kill adult mosquitoes; carrying out inspections, removing stagnant water, applying larvicide and disposing of abandoned water containers weekly to prevent mosquito breeding; and trimming of grass to discourage resting of adult mosquitoes.

"The relevant government departments have continued the above mosquito prevention and control work in areas under their purview, particularly in the areas with the Area Ovitrap Index (AOI) reaching alert levels. Among the 57 areas surveyed, the number of areas with the AOI exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent has decreased from 17 in June to two in July, i.e. Sheung Shui (24.6 per cent) and Ma On Shan (23.4 per cent). As for the port areas, the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for July also dropped to 2.2 per cent from 2.6 per cent in June."

An inter-departmental anti-mosquito response mechanism has also been activated in the above-mentioned areas 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 when the AOI reached the alert level of 20 per cent. Subscribers have been invited to post specially designed alert notices in the common parts of their premises

to remind occupants and staff to carry out anti-mosquito measures promptly."ã€€

In addition, the FEHD will launch the third phase of the territory-wide Anti-mosquito Campaign on August 19, which will last for 12 weeks. During the period, the district offices of the FEHD will target areas that have drawn particular concerns, 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 step up publicity at those places as well as mosquito prevention and control work at relevant public places.

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The FEHD has also handled mosquito complaints promptly and taken out prosecutions under the relevant ordinance against mosquito breeding. Pest Control Inspection Teams have stepped up inspections and enforcement actions at construction sites against mosquito breeding. This year (as at August 11), the FEHD instituted 116 prosecutions for mosquito breeding found in relevant premises under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), comprising 107 cases involving construction sites and nine cases involving other premises.

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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 AOIs 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.

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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 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 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.

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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 take 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 relevant government departments via 1823 if mosquito problems are detected.

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

He also reminded travellers to take the following precautionary measures when visiting areas where mosquito-borne diseases are prevalent during the summer holidays:

- \* Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved clothes and trousers;
- \* Use insect repellent over exposed parts of the body when outdoors; and
- \* Use mosquito screens or nets when a room is not air-conditioned.

Travellers returning from areas where mosquito-borne diseases are prevalent should seek medical advice if they have symptoms such as fever, a severe headache or muscle and joint pain. They should also inform their doctor of their travel history.

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](http://www.fehd.gov.hk).