

EEB meets trade representatives on Government's anti-rodent work (with photo)

The Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB) today (March 5) met trade representatives on the Cross-sectoral Territory-wide Anti-rodent Action, to share with them the Government's latest anti-rodent experiences and to strengthen co-operation among the Government, businesses and the community while encouraging various sectors to continue to adopt effective rodent prevention and control measures in the coming year.

Through a multipronged approach, the anti-rodent work has gradually shown achievements. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) caught around 65 500 live rodents in the past year (from February 2023 to January 2024), about 39 per cent more than the 47 200 rodents caught in the corresponding period of the previous year (from February 2022 to January 2023), out of which around 26 700 live rodents were caught by the overnight rodent control teams set up by the FEHD, accounting for more than 40 per cent of the total number of live rodents caught by the FEHD across the territory in the same period.

Representatives from different sectors (including markets/licensed hawkers, property management, catering industry and construction sector) were informed of the progress of the Government's rodent control work, including the achievements of the anti-rodent work performed by the FEHD's overnight rodent control teams at night when rodents are more common, and they expressed that they will share the relevant information with other stakeholders. If needed, the FEHD and the pest control sector stand ready to provide more in-depth briefings.

At the end of 2022, the FEHD launched a trial scheme in various districts to allow licensed food premises under specified conditions to place large-size waste containers in their adjacent rear lanes for proper temporary storage of waste until collection by the cleaning workers hired by the food premises. Currently, the trial scheme has been extended to 28 rear lanes across the territory. As the scheme has achieved good results, depending on the actual situation of the districts, the FEHD will further extend the scheme to cover more suitable rear lanes, and urges food premises to participate actively. Also, in April last year, the FEHD completed the introduction of a new licensing condition to all fresh provision shops to strengthen the regulations on receiving meat and poultry, so as to prevent the meat and poultry from invasion or contamination by pests or the ambient environment.

Regarding food waste recycling, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is providing free point-to-point collection services for premises with a larger quantity of food waste. It also provides mobile food waste

collection services for districts with catering businesses, and is progressively placing purple food waste recycling bins with covers in places near street-level eatery clusters, such as about 100 refuse collection points under the FEHD and suitable rear lanes. This year, the EPD will install smart food waste recycling bins with a sealed design and odour abatement function in all public rental housing estates across the territory, as well as in interested private housing estates through funding projects. The EPD will continue to expand the recycling network, in order to enable the public and various sectors to provide food waste for conversion into energy or resources, and to enhance environmental hygiene by eliminating the food sources of rodents. Representatives of the catering industry expressed that they will actively promote participation and co-operation among catering businesses.

Furthermore, property management companies followed up on the environmental hygiene and anti-rodent work in premises under their respective management. For public housing estates, the Housing Authority will continue to step up daily cleaning at its public housing estates, and implement targeted pest control measures. The District Offices will continue to include pest control work in the contracts of cleaning services provided for the common parts of "three-nil" buildings as needed. Relevant departments also plan to conduct inspections with District Council members of each district and organise joint environmental hygiene operations with local stakeholders as needed.

In the meeting, the pest control industry introduced the latest developments in the application of technology, including using lenses with sensing technology, and applying the Internet of Things technology to pest control work. Representatives of other sectors also shared the effective control measures implemented in their respective premises, including complying with the guidelines and code of practice issued by the FEHD, continuing to keep their premises free from rodent infestation, applying anti-rodent technologies and tools more widely, and organising and attending pest control seminars and promotional activities.

Representatives from the FEHD introduced the new rodent surveillance programme implemented by the department this year. The programme will be conducted biannually. About 100 survey locations in each district will be identified via stratified sampling for installation of thermal cameras, and artificial intelligence technology will be used to analyse the images showing the presence of rodents. The FEHD and relevant departments can devise more targeted anti-rodent work with reference to the surveillance outcome. The Government will introduce the new rodent surveillance programme in the Legislative Council Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene later.

The Action has been introduced since the end of 2022 in order to consolidate strengths from the Government and various sectors of the community for a cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary, and community-wide approach to anti-rodent work. While various sectors and government departments are consolidating the rodent control work, the public is encouraged to actively participate in rodent prevention and control actions

by eliminating the food, harbourage and passages of rodents.

The meeting was chaired by the Under Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Miss Diane Wong. Participants of the meeting came from 18 organisations or institutions, including the Hong Kong Housing Society, Link, People's Place, the Hong Kong Property Services Alliance, the Hong Kong Association of Property Management Companies, the Federation of Hong Kong Property Management Industry, the Hong Kong Association of Property Services Agents, the Hong Kong Institute of Housing, the Pest Control Personnel Association of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Pest Management Association, the Federation of Hong Kong, Kowloon, New Territories Hawker Associations, the Hong Kong Federation of Restaurants and Related Trades, the Institute of Dining Professionals, the Association of Restaurant Managers, the Hong Kong Japanese Food and Cuisine Association, the International Food and Beverage Association, the Hong Kong Construction Association and the Hong Kong General Building Contractors Association.

