

FEHD continues to arrange free COVID-19 testing services for targeted groups

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) announced today (November 16) that it will continue to arrange voluntary free COVID-19 testing services for targeted groups. In view of the detection of the virus on packaging materials of frozen commodities in the Mainland and other places in recent days, the FEHD is extending the testing services to cover practitioners of cold stores to safeguard public health. Registration is not required and the testing agency (Prenetics Limited) will contact the operators of all licensed cold stores as soon as possible to arrange testing services for their staff starting from November 18.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "To broaden surveillance at the community level, and incorporate disease prevention and infection control into the new normal of the daily operation of society, the Government will integrate and regularise the Targeted Group Testing Scheme (TGTS) as part of its sentinel surveillance. The TGTS will become part of the surveillance and early-warning system. By facilitating contact tracing and epidemiological investigations, it will be conducive to 'early identification, early isolation and early treatment', and can provide reference data for the overall assessment of the epidemic situation."

The FEHD currently has been arranging testing every week for those working in the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse, and will continue to provide voluntary free virus testing services for high-exposure groups, including catering premises staff (licensed general restaurants, licensed light refreshment restaurants, licensed marine restaurants, licensed factory canteens, school canteens, staff canteens, bars and pubs), staff and personnel working in FEHD markets, hawker licensees and registered assistants.

Under the scheme, the testing agency will be responsible for the provision of one-stop services covering specimen taking and testing. The testing agency will deliver specimen bottles to the premises for collecting deep throat saliva samples, and then collect the samples in the subsequent one to two days for testing. The person-in-charge of the premises should return all unused specimen bottles to the testing agency on the day of the sample collection. Cases with preliminary positive results will be relayed to the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health for follow-up.

The FEHD strongly appeals to the groups concerned to actively participate in the testing scheme, and continue to comply with the directions made under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), and to maintain personal and environmental hygiene continuously with a view to ensuring cleanliness of the premises and food safety.

For details of the testing programme, please call the hotline of the testing agency at 3008 8319 or visit the FEHD website (www.fehd.gov.hk).