

FEHD to launch first round of anti-rodent operation in designated target areas next Monday

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (April 29) that the FEHD has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to strengthen the effectiveness of anti-rodent work in the districts. The first round of an eight-week anti-rodent operation in designated target areas in various districts will be launched next Monday (May 2) to raise public awareness of rodent prevention and control.

Taking into account factors including rodent infestation rates, the number of rodent complaints received, views of the local community, the number of food premises and "three-nil" buildings, each District Environmental Hygiene Office (DEHO) of the FEHD will identify target areas in each district and carry out targeted rodent prevention and control work by improving environmental hygiene and stepping up rodent disinfection and enforcement actions.

In order to further enhance the effectiveness of rodent prevention and control work at the district level, the FEHD will make use of thermal cameras in all designated target areas across the territory to detect rodent activities and dispersal routes. Visual data collected at different time stages of the operations will be analysed to devise more targeted rodent prevention and control strategy. The FEHD will keep abreast of information about new products in the market, and remain open-minded. The FEHD will consider introducing new technologies and equipment, if suitable, to enhance the effectiveness of rodent control work.

At survey locations with a high rodent infestation rate, apart from monitoring rodent activities by thermal cameras, the DEHO concerned will also step up street cleaning and refuse collection services to improve environmental hygiene. The DEHO convened an inter-departmental district anti-rodent task force meeting with relevant government departments, representatives from organisations and housing estates concerned, among others, asking them to adopt targeted rodent prevention and control strategies. The DEHO also issued letters to owners' corporations and the property management companies to provide information and technical advice on rodent prevention and control.

For some high-risk food premises and cooked food markets, the FEHD conducted inspections and stepped up public education and publicity to persons-in-charge and staff of food premises as well as stall tenants of cooked food markets and advised them on rodent prevention and control. Cleaning work, rodent prevention and control was enhanced at the cooked food markets.

In response to recent reports, the spokesman emphasised that the mere dividing of the overall expenditure on pest control work by the number of rodents trapped cannot fully and truly reflect the outcome and effectiveness of the FEHD's rodent control work. In fact, in addition to trapping and poisoning, rodent control work also includes routine inspecting rodent black spots, taking enforcement actions, conducting joint inspections, providing technical support for various departments/organisations, carrying out publicity and education work as well as following up rodent complaints.

The FEHD has been closely monitoring the performance of pest control services contractor staff. The pest control services contract requires contractor staff to meet specific qualifications and have completed recognised training courses on pest control. Supervisors are also required to have experience in the prevention and control of mosquitoes, rodents or other pests. The FEHD has a stringent contract management system, and conducts regular and surprise inspections. If a contractor's performance is found to be unsatisfactory during on-site inspections, the FEHD will take action in accordance with the current sanction mechanism.

In view of the fruitful results of the previous anti-rodent operations in designated target areas, the FEHD will again conduct two rounds of the operation this year. Having regard to significant improvements in filling of rat holes, dead rodents collection and poisonous bait placement, etc., in the three districts under the enhanced version of the operations during the last round, the FEHD will, during the first round of the operation to be commenced next Monday, conduct an enhanced version of the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas in Central/Western, Southern, Tsuen Wan, Tai Po, Wong Tai Sin and Kowloon City Districts to expand the scope of rodent control, so as to cover more rodent blackspots, including those in public markets and municipal services buildings, hawker bazaars, and rear lanes adjacent to food premises, and to conduct large-scale and targeted anti-rodent operations.

FEHD staff will enhance street cleaning services and cleaning of public markets and hawker bazaars in the target areas, including sweeping and cleaning of streets and rear lanes, emptying and cleaning of litter containers, and clearance of miscellaneous articles and waste in public markets and hawker bazaars. They will also place poisonous baits and traps, treating rat holes and implementing rodent-proofing measures at problematic spots such as rear lanes, refuse collection points, markets, hawker bazaars, cooked food markets and peripheral areas of construction sites.

The spokesperson said, "We will step up inspections of food premises. Enforcement actions against food premises causing poor environmental hygiene conditions, scullery and food preparation at rear lanes, and improper handling and disposal of rubbish will be strengthened. The FEHD will also adopt a zero-tolerance approach and take stringent enforcement actions against common public cleanliness offences."

The FEHD will also reinforce public education and publicity on rodent prevention and control. Apart from the broadcast of publicity videos and display of posters, the FEHD will collaborate with District Councils and

District Offices of the Home Affairs Department to organise anti-rodent promotional activities. The department will also arrange health talks for building management offices of private buildings, persons-in-charge of food premises, and market and hawker stall operators to provide information and technical advice on rodent prevention and control.

The spokesman appealed to the community for active participation in the anti-rodent activities as well as joint efforts to eliminate the three fundamental survival conditions of rodents, namely food, harbourage and passages, i.e. the elimination of the food sources and hiding places of rodents as well as blockage of their dispersal routes, so as to combat the rodent problem.