

Government commences territory-wide All-out Anti-mosquito Operations

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (April 15) announced that the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for March rose to 1.1 per cent from 0.1 per cent in February, indicating that the infestation of *Aedes albopictus* in the areas surveyed was not extensive. Nevertheless, the FEHD reminded the public to carry out effective prevention and control measures against mosquitoes early before the onset of the rainy season. Relevant government departments have also commenced the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations today to enhance anti-mosquito work throughout the territory.

Among the 57 areas surveyed last month, positive ovitrap indices were recorded in 28 areas, ranging from 0.8 per cent to 6.6 per cent, with Cheung Chau ranked the highest. As for the port areas, the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for March rose slightly to 0.01 per cent from zero in February.

"*Aedes albopictus* is a kind of mosquito that can transmit dengue fever (DF) and Zika virus. In view of the 29 local DF cases recorded in Hong Kong last year and the high prevalence of DF in neighbouring areas, and that Hong Kong has a warmer and wetter spring this year which is conducive to large-scale mosquito breeding within a short period of time, relevant government departments have enhanced co-operation to eliminate potential breeding places for mosquitoes ahead of the rainy season and commenced the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations today to run until the end of the rainy season so as to start the fogging operations specifically at risky areas to eradicate adult mosquitoes. The community should also remain vigilant and take effective mosquito prevention and control measures together," an FEHD spokesman said.

"The major anti-mosquito measures of the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations include carrying out fogging in the scrubby areas within a 100-metre radius around residences weekly to kill adult mosquitoes; carrying out inspection, removing stagnant water, applying insecticide and disposing of abandoned water containers weekly to prevent mosquito breeding; and trimming of grass to discourage resting of the adult mosquitoes on the site. The FEHD and relevant government departments will continue the above mosquito prevention and control work in areas under their purview, and strengthen publicity and education campaigns in the coming months. In addition, the FEHD has also started the second phase of its Anti-mosquito Campaign today which lasts for nine weeks until June 14. The district offices of the FEHD will target areas which have drawn particular concern, 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. The FEHD will, after the second phase of the campaign, conduct territory-wide

thematic mosquito prevention and control special operations so as to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign," he added.

The department's Pest Control Inspection Teams have also stepped up inspection of construction sites and enforcement action against mosquito breeding. This year (as at April 7), the FEHD had instituted 26 prosecutions for mosquito breeding found in relevant premises under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), comprising 25 cases involving construction sites and one case involving other premises.

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 Area Ovitrap Index (AOI) 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 to strengthen the anti-mosquito efforts.

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 all 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 the 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.

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 follow 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 the government departments via 1823 if mosquito problems are detected.

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

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

- * Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved clothes and trousers;
- * Use insect repellents over exposed parts of the body when outdoors; and

* Use mosquito screens or nets when a room is not air-conditioned.

Travellers returning from these places should seek medical advice if they have symptoms such as fever, 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.