

Government formulates pest control work plan for this year

The inter-departmental Pest Control Steering Committee (PCSC) had a meeting today (January 6) via video conferencing to review the effectiveness of anti-rodent and anti-mosquito work of the previous year, and to formulate the pest control work plan for this year.

Review of work in 2021

Representatives of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) reported at the meeting that relevant bureaux/departments (B/Ds) have met various work targets on mosquito and rodent control laid down by the PCSC in early 2021. The trend of the mosquito surveillance index of 2021 was under control, and the situation of mosquito proliferation was broadly the same as that in 2020. The overall Rodent Infestation Rate (RIR) has improved, with 3.1 per cent in 2021 as compared with 3.6 per cent in 2020. The number of survey locations with an RIR at Level 2 (meaning rodent infestation was slightly extensive) dropped to three from seven in 2020.

The meeting also reviewed the enhancement measures on pest control by various B/Ds last year, including:

(1) Strengthening inter-departmental collaboration: The FEHD and other B/Ds set up a high-level liaison mechanism in June last year on mosquito control. The mechanism is triggered once the first phase Gravidtrap Index has continuously reached 20 per cent or above in respect of a survey area, such that more effective co-ordination on mosquito prevention and control operations among B/Ds can be made.

(2) Intensifying pest control operations: The FEHD conducted two rounds of anti-rodent operations in designated target areas throughout the city from May to June and from November to December 2021. The second round of the operations featured, for the first time, an enhanced version in Sham Shui Po, Wan Chai and Yuen Long. Under the enhanced version of the operations, the scope of rodent control was expanded, and large-scale and targeted anti-rodent operations were conducted in more rodent black spots such as public markets and municipal services buildings, hawker bazaars, and rear lanes adjacent to food premises. During the two rounds of operations, the FEHD also strengthened the enforcement action for enhanced deterrent effect, including issuing fixed penalty notices to or making prosecutions against those who illegally disposed of refuse and waste. Rodent problems have been improved in the target areas concerned after the two rounds of operations.

The Housing Department (HD) implemented additional rodent control measures in 80 selected priority estates in three batches last year. The first two batches were completed in end-October 2021. The HD and the

FEHD/local stakeholders conducted about 120 joint inspections and some 130 joint cleaning operations. The third batch commenced in December 2021 and will end in February this year. The HD will continue to step up rodent prevention and control measures and enhance residents' awareness on hygiene.

(3) Applying technologies: Large robotics ultra-low volume foggers that can be mounted on vehicles have been introduced to facilitate the killing of adult mosquitoes in places that are difficult for workers to reach. In addition, thermal cameras have also been used, in places such as seven public rental housing estates, for monitoring rodent activities and planning anti-rodent operations.

As for other cleaning operations, the Home Affairs Department and its District Offices have been acting according to actual circumstances to assist buildings in need, including "three-nil" buildings (i.e. buildings which do not have owners' corporations or any form of residents' organisations, or do not engage the service of property management companies), via arrangements such as the District-led Actions Scheme. Through the provision of one-off cleaning services at common parts of these buildings, the effectiveness of good building management is demonstrated and the opportunity has also been taken to call on residents to maintain good environmental hygiene. In 2021, cleaning services were provided over 4 300 times for some 1 600 "three-nil" buildings in various districts.

Prospects on work in 2022

Looking ahead, each B/D agreed to continue the strategy of strengthening pest control work through inter-departmental collaboration, application of technology and community engagement. The meeting has set out a number of specific work targets. On mosquito prevention and control, the meeting agreed to set out targets including having no more than five survey areas with an Area Gravidtrap Index exceeding 20 per cent for two months or more, eliminating about 72 000 mosquito breeding places, and monitoring the density level of *Aedes albopictus* in each survey area using the Density Index. Targets for rodent control include increasing the poison treatments of rodent infestation to over 100 000 and rodent traps to over 86 000 across the city.

As regards inter-departmental collaboration, each B/D agreed to continue enhancing the cleaning work of different areas. The HD will again select 80 priority estates for implementing additional rodent control measures so as to enhance the hygiene of those estates as well as publicity and educational activities on rodent control and prevention. Before the rainy season, B/Ds shall reduce potential mosquito breeding sites, constantly update hotspot lists of mosquito proliferation and carry out fogging operations. The meeting reiterated that effective mosquito control requires the effort of all parties, and that all B/Ds must work together with the community in carrying out effective mosquito control measures.

Furthermore, the FEHD will continue to keep watch on any new project in the market, consult professionals, explore suitable technologies and study

the feasibility of introducing and applying new technologies in the Government's pest control work. The FEHD will also share information with other B/Ds at appropriate junctures for enhancing the effectiveness of the work concerned.

On the community engagement front, relevant B/Ds will step up publicity and education campaigns, and enhance collaboration with district organisations on anti-mosquito operations for encouraging the public to keep the environment clean and eliminating the food sources of rodents. All these aim to have more effective promotion on the mosquito and rodent prevention and control work at the community level.

Representatives from three bureaux and 21 departments/organisations attended today's meeting.