

Government plans ahead for this year's pest control work

The inter-departmental Pest Control Steering Committee (PCSC) held a meeting today (March 5) to formulate the work plans and indicators for rodent and mosquito control this year. Various departments will conduct more targeted pest control work at venues under their respective management.

At the meeting today, the PCSC formulated indicators and work plan for this year to drive departments in stepping up their effort in rodent control. The plan includes the use of poison treatments of rodent infestation and rodent trappings by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD); designation of about 80 priority estates by the Housing Authority for conducting additional preventive, promotion and education efforts; improvement works in back alleys by the Highways Department on a need basis; further deployment of thermal cameras to detect rodent activities by the FEHD in all designated target areas across the territory and survey areas where rodent infestation is more severe, with a view to making anti-rodent operations more targeted and effective; and enhancements to the Rodent Infestation Survey (RIS), including disseminating surveillance data to various departments through the Government's Geospatial Information Hub (GIH) platform by mid-2021 to facilitate early intervention, as well as releasing the Rodent Infestation Rate (RIR) of 50 survey areas to the public in the second quarter of 2021.

The FEHD has been enhancing the surveillance of rodent infestation in multiple areas. It is working with the Lands Department to prepare for the immediate dissemination of detailed information at individual surveillance locations of the RIS through the Government's GIH platform. This arrangement will help departments conduct timely and targeted anti-rodent operations. On the other hand, further to the increase of the number of survey areas from 41 (about 2 300 baiting points) to 50 (about 2 700 baiting points) by the FEHD last year, the RIR at all 50 survey areas will be made public starting from the second quarter of this year. In respect of survey areas where rodent infestation is more severe, the FEHD will conduct re-assessments at these locations after a one-month period of mitigation measures. This mode of strengthened monitoring was proved to be effective in containing the rodent problem during the earlier pilot scheme. The FEHD will also deploy the thermal camera monitoring system for taking targeted rodent control operations at locations where the RIR remains relatively high.

In addition to the aforementioned control measures targeting at rodent infestation hotspots and enhanced surveillance, various departments agreed at the meeting to step up public engagement and education to encourage citizens to keep the environment clean and eliminate food sources for rodents, thereby addressing the problem of rodent infestation at source.

As regards anti-mosquito work, the Government will consolidate the

progress achieved last year. Indicators for this year include eliminating mosquito breeding places; strengthening prevention and control work at survey areas recorded with Area Gravidtrap Index (AGI) exceeding 20 per cent; keeping the AGI of all survey areas below 40 per cent; and establishing a reference level for corresponding prevention and control measures for the new Density Index (DI) for *Aedes albopictus*, which was introduced last year, by the end of 2021.

On enhancing surveillance, since April 2020, the FEHD has introduced newly designed gravidtraps to replace ovitraps previously used to directly count the number of adult mosquitoes, so as to enumerate the Gravidtrap Index and the new DI, which reflect the extensiveness of distribution and the density of *Aedes albopictus* respectively. To further enhance dengue vector surveillance, the FEHD has increased the number of survey areas from 62 (about 3 360 gravidtraps) to 64 (about 3 440 gravidtraps) from January 2021. The FEHD will consolidate and review the Area Density Index data collected since April 2020 and analyse the statistics in different seasons, with a view to establishing a reference level for the DI by the end of this year, thereby facilitating the timely conduct of necessary mosquito control work by relevant departments.

In light of the effectiveness of the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations in suppressing mosquito proliferation over the past two years, the Government will continue to adopt the relevant modus operandi before the rainy season this year. During the cool and dry season, various departments will inspect their venues and eliminate potential breeding places early, and deploy a total of over 5 500 mosquito trapping devices for eradicating adult mosquitoes. The FEHD will closely monitor the changes in local weather and notify various departments to start the operations simultaneously prior to the rainy season, which includes fogging operations. Departments will keep eliminating breeding places throughout the operations, promptly carry out targeted mosquito prevention and control work based on the surveillance indices, and constantly update the list of mosquito infestation hotspots.

Representatives from three bureaux and 20 departments/organisation attended today's meeting.