

Hong Kong Customs breaks record again by seizing about 13 000 suspected smuggled hairy crabs (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs seized about 13 000 suspected smuggled hairy crabs and about 3 tonnes of suspected smuggled goods with a total estimated market value of about \$1.2 million at Man Kam To Control Point on November 13. While breaking the record of 7 700 suspected smuggled hairy crabs made on October 29, the hairy crab seizure in this case has become the biggest haul of its type in terms of both quantity and weight.

Customs officers on that day intercepted two incoming lorries at the control point. After inspection, the batch of about 13 000 suspected unmanifested hairy crabs with an estimated market value of about \$1 million was found mixed with other declared goods carried by one of the lorries.

A batch of suspected unmanifested goods, including a small quantity of hairy crabs, meat, poultry, game, frozen food, illicit cigarettes and medicines, estimated to be worth about \$200,000, were found in the other lorry. In addition, about 150 tubes of suspected blood samples in the driver's possession were also seized.

The hairy crabs seized in the case did not come with health certificates issued by the relevant authorities of the exporting economies and failed to comply with the requirements of the Shell Fish (Hairy Crab) Permit. The seized meat, poultry and game also came without health certificates issued by an issuing entity from the place of origin or obtaining prior permission in writing from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD).

The two male lorry drivers, aged 62 and 47, were arrested. An investigation is ongoing.

Customs has passed information regarding the suspected smuggled hairy crabs, meat, poultry and game to the FEHD for follow-up investigation. The tubes of suspected blood samples were handed over to the Department of Health (DH) for follow-up.

Customs reminds members of the public that smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

According to the Imported Game, Meat, Poultry and Eggs Regulations, any person who imports game, meat, poultry or eggs should produce a health certificate issued by an issuing entity from the place of origin or obtain prior permission in writing from the FEHD. Offenders are liable on conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment.

According to the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, all food available for sale in Hong Kong, locally produced or imported, should be fit for human consumption. An offender is subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction. Moreover, under the Food Safety Ordinance, any person who, without reasonable excuse, does not register but carries on a food importation or distribution business commits an offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

According to the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation, any person who imports any excreta, secretion, blood or blood component that the person has reason to suspect contains an infectious agent should obtain prior permission in writing from the DH. Offenders are liable on conviction to a fine of \$5,000 and two months' imprisonment.

Customs will continue to take stringent enforcement action against cross-boundary smuggling activities through risk assessment and intelligence analysis.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

