

Hong Kong Customs in joint operations with FEHD seizes about 14 000 suspected smuggled hairy crabs (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) mounted joint operations at Man Kam To Control Point and Shenzhen Bay Control Point on October 28, November 5 and yesterday (November 7). A total of about 14 000 suspected smuggled hairy crabs and about 1 000 kilograms of suspected smuggled chilled food with a total estimated market value of about \$1.46 million were seized.

Customs officers intercepted three incoming goods vehicles at the two control points on the above-mentioned three days. After inspection, the batch of suspected unmanifested hairy crabs and chilled food were found mingled with other properly declared goods on board the vehicles.

The estimated market value of the suspected unmanifested hairy crabs seized was about \$1.4 million while that of the suspected unmanifested chilled food, including meat and poultry, was about \$60,000.

Furthermore, the seized hairy crabs 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 chilled meat and poultry seized also came without health certificates issued by an issuing entity from the place of origin or obtaining prior permission in writing from the FEHD.

Three male drivers aged between 42 and 64 were arrested. An investigation is ongoing.

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.

Customs and the CFS will keep up close co-operation and intelligence exchanges, while joint operations will be conducted to combat illegal food import activities.

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).

