

Hong Kong Customs sets up first Tobacco Detector Dog Team (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs today (July 15) announced that the first Tobacco Detector Dog Team has been set up to further strengthen Customs' capability in interception at source to combat the smuggling of illicit tobacco into Hong Kong, enhancing enforcement effectiveness in combating illicit cigarettes.

Further to the establishment of the first Firearm Detector Dog Team in December last year, Customs has trained tobacco detector dogs and dog handlers on its own to realise a development strategy formulated by the Customs Canine Force (CCF) along the direction of diversification and to expand the detector dogs' sniffing ability.

Apart from training the current four types of detector dogs, namely drug detector dogs, explosive detector dogs, cash detector dogs and firearm detector dogs, the CCF has self-developed a tobacco detector dog training programme for the first time to train the detector dogs' abilities to intercept tobacco. After training, the tobacco detector dogs can sniff out different types of tobacco products, including cigarettes and cigars, in a bid to assist Customs officers to combat illicit cigarette activities on all fronts.

The tobacco detector dogs this time were selected from the Springer Spaniel puppies bred under the canine breeding co-operation between Customs and the Fire Services Department in February last year. They received regular training for 12 weeks when they reached 1 year old and officially became tobacco detector dogs after passing examinations.

The newly formed Tobacco Detector Dog Team comprises four sub-teams, with each having a dog handler and a detector dog. The tobacco detector dogs are able to assist Customs officers to carry out efficient and effective assessment on cargo consignments carried by large conveyances. Coupled with intelligence analysis and risk management, Customs' clearance efficiency and enforcement capability to intercept illicit cigarettes at the control points will be greatly enhanced.

The self-bred working dogs have officially performed duties after puppy nurturing with care and professional training. This has proven the professionalism of Customs in three aspects, namely canine breeding, puppy nurturing and staff training, and the achievement in developing detector dog management as one of the branches of professionalism for the department.

The Tobacco Detector Dog Team has been deployed to the airport, land boundary control points and container terminals to provide effective support to the department in combating tobacco smuggling activities.

