

Inter-departmental efforts on pest control

Different policy bureaux, government departments and organisations met today (July 13) to review the effectiveness of various pest control efforts of the Government and plan ahead the strategies for pest control.

At the first meeting of the Pest Control Steering Committee today, members reviewed the effectiveness of their work on pest control and undertook to continue to step up their control measures at areas under their management.

The Under Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi, said, "The Steering Committee provides an efficient platform for policy bureaux, government departments and other relevant organisations to grasp the latest situation of pest problems so as to commence prevention and control measures under their respective purview more swiftly.

"To maintain environmental hygiene with a view to eliminating rodent infestation and mosquito breeding, the efforts of the responsible government departments and the active participation of the community are crucial."

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) briefed the attendees on the mosquito breeding situation in Hong Kong. They noted that the monthly ovitrap indices recorded this year were generally similar in trend to those of previous years.

In monitoring the dengue vector, in response to the local dengue fever cases reported in 2016 and 2017, urban development and requests from the public and District Councils, a total of five additional surveillance areas in Central and Western District, Kwun Tong District, Sha Tin District, Tsuen Wan District and Tuen Mun District have been covered since July 2018. An annual review on the scope of the existing 57 dengue vector surveillance areas will also be conducted at the end of 2018.

In addition, starting from July 2018, the survey frequency for all the 57 surveillance areas has been increased from one week per month to two weeks per month. Furthermore, the frequency of survey in all sea and land ports has also been increased from two weeks per month to a weekly basis. Dengue virus and Zika virus testing will continue to be carried out on mosquito samples collected from community areas where Area Ovitrap Indices have reached or exceeded 10 per cent, areas related to local dengue fever cases and also in all port areas.

To enhance the knowledge and skills on pest prevention and control among staff of other departments, the FEHD will organise pest control training courses for staff of relevant departments – from front-line staff to senior and middle management – with a view to enhancing their confidence and

competence to effectively execute the daily pest control work and monitor the performance of their service contractors in their venues.

In the first six months of this year, the FEHD had instigated 78 prosecutions against mosquito breeding in premises under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, among which 76 involved construction sites. The FEHD will continue to deploy dedicated teams to enhance inspection of construction sites and enforcement against mosquito breeding.

During the meeting, respective departments were encouraged to consider including pest control services into the services contracts when outsourcing the management of their venues, and to take proactive measures to closely monitor the performance of their pest control contractors to ensure the proper and effective delivery of pest control services within their venues. If the work is considered unsatisfactory, the relevant departments may reflect the situation in the performance assessment reports of the contractors or management companies. Such assessment results may affect the qualification of those contractors or management companies in joining tender exercises in future.

In addition, the attendees were briefed on the FEHD's observations on the effective strategies in controlling biting midges in respect of the preliminary results of the one-year territory-wide study on biting midges.

The FEHD also took the opportunity to advise attendees on the effective rodent control measures, including the suggestion for relevant departments to carry out trial schemes similar to the FEHD's Anti-rodent Operation at Designated Target Areas. It would also explore devising indicators, other than the existing Rodent Infestation Rate, for evaluating the rodent infestation situation in specific locations where rodent infestation is acute.

The FEHD will continue to make use of a wide range of promotional channels, such as the FEHD's website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/index.html), the Keep Clean Ambassador Ah Tak Facebook page (www.facebook.com/cleanhongkong/) and Instagram Page (www.instagram.com/keepclean_ahtak/), posters, leaflets, Announcements in the Public Interest, VCDs and letters to target groups, for the purpose of encouraging community participation in the prevention and control of pests.

Government bureaux, departments and organisations joining the meeting today were the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department; the Architectural Services Department; the Civil Engineering and Development Department; the Department of Health; the Development Bureau; the Drainage Services Department; the Education Bureau; the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department; the Environmental Protection Department; the FEHD; the Government Property Agency; the Hospital Authority; the Home Affairs Department; the Housing Department; the Highways Department; the Information Services Department; the Lands Department; the Leisure and Cultural Services Department; the Social Welfare Department; the Transport Department; and the Water Supplies Department.

For more effective inter-departmental co-ordination, the Anti-Mosquito Steering Committee is now renamed as the Pest Control Steering Committee. Issues on pest control other than mosquito control, such as rodent and biting midge control, are also discussed by this Steering Committee.