

Inter-departmental Pest Control Steering Committee plans ahead for this year's work (with photos)

The inter-departmental Pest Control Steering Committee held its first meeting of this year today (January 24) to discuss how to improve the Government's overall surveillance and response mechanism and to map out the focus of pest control work and the work plan for this year. It set objectives in three areas: strengthening prevention, co-ordination and surveillance.

The Under Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi, who chaired the meeting, said, "The Steering Committee has met early this year to plan ahead for the overall deployment and formulate strategies for pest control work throughout the year with an aim to facilitate early commencement of mosquito and rodent control work in a systematic manner under the respective purviews of different bureaux and departments."

Consolidating experiences from last year, the Government is of the view that early prevention is the most effective approach to pest control. The Government will commence and strengthen targeted operations to prevent mosquito breeding before the rainy season. Once the rainy season arrives, staff will be mobilised to conduct fogging operations to eliminate adult mosquitoes. The Government will collaborate with the District Councils and local communities to avoid massive mosquito breeding after the rainy season.

Under the co-ordination of the Steering Committee, a number of departments have been allocated additional resources to enhance pest control work. The Steering Committee has also requested the departments to include standard pest control terms when entering into new cleaning service contracts to better monitor the contractors' performance and effectiveness in pest control work.

In order to facilitate implementation of effective prevention and control measures under the purview of different departments as well as to enhance co-ordination and effectiveness, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) provided suggestions and guidelines on pest control work to other departments at the meeting and will continue to offer technical support.

To address rodent problems, the Government will adopt a multi-pronged approach to strengthen cleaning, rodent disinfection and enforcement. The Housing Department, together with the FEHD, is conducting a three-month anti-rodent operation in target areas in two public housing estates on a trial basis to enhance the effectiveness of anti-rodent work.

The Steering Committee agreed to increase the number of survey areas of dengue fever vectors and rodent infestation. As for surveillance on dengue

fever vectors, there are currently 57 survey areas (with about 3 200 ovitraps) in the territory. Four additional survey areas (with about 150 additional ovitraps) will be put in place this year to further monitor the activity of *Aedes albopictus*. As for surveillance on rodent infestation, the number of survey areas will be increased from 41 (around 2 300 baiting points) to 50 (around 2 650 baiting points). The Government will take into account factors like residential areas, areas with previous occurrence of local dengue fever cases and places prone to rodent infestation, as well as district feedback, in deciding on the locations of the additional survey areas.

As regards application of technology for mosquito and rodent disinfection, the FEHD is proactively exploring the feasibility of applying various techniques in Hong Kong and conducting relevant tests. Progress of its work was reported to other departments during the meeting. If applicable to the local environment, the FEHD will liaise with the relevant departments to further improve the surveillance systems of mosquito and rodent infestation so as to enhance responding strategies and the effectiveness of prevention and control work.

Apart from the above, the Steering Committee noted that the species of biting midges found in Hong Kong are not disease vectors. However, relevant departments will formulate targeted measures taking into account biting midges' habits as well as seasonal and geographical features to abate nuisance caused by biting midges. Those measures will be carried out at places where biting midges are active, such as parks, to minimise breeding of biting midges.

Dr Chui said, "Pest control should start from home and the neighbourhood. Apart from the strengthened measures carried out by government departments, we encourage the District Councils and local communities to actively participate in and co-operate with the work of the Government. Members of the public should also maintain personal and environmental hygiene."

Representatives from three bureaux, 19 departments and one organisation attended today's meeting.

