

Joint operation makes record seizure of suspected smuggled hairy crabs (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) seized a total of about 7 700 suspected smuggled hairy crabs and about 7.7 tonnes of suspected smuggled frozen food with a total estimated market value of about \$1.2 million in a joint operation at Man Kam To Control Point on October 29. The hairy crab seizure is the biggest haul of its type in terms of both quantity and weight.

Customs officers on that day intercepted an incoming goods vehicle at the control point. After inspection, the suspected unmanifested hairy crabs and frozen food were found mingled with other properly declared goods.

The suspected unmanifested hairy crabs and the frozen food are each estimated worth about \$600,000. The food seized included frozen meat, poultry and fisheries products.

Furthermore, the 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 frozen meat also came without health certificates issued by an issuing entity from the place of origin or obtaining prior permission in writing from the FEHD.

The 50-year-old male driver was 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.

Both departments will keep up close co-operation and intelligence exchanges, while joint operations against illegal food imports will also continue.

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).

