

LCQ10: Reducing nuisances caused by wild pigs

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 19):

Question:

In recent days, a number of incidents of wild pigs intruding into urban areas have occurred, and some wild pigs have even intruded into residential areas as well as crowded places, causing nuisances to members of the public and attacking them. There are views that the penalties imposed by the Government on persons feeding wild pigs illegally lack deterrent effect, resulting in incessant illegal feeding and wild pigs habitually foraging food in urban areas. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the new measures put in place by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) to reduce the intrusion of wild pigs into residential areas and crowded places;
- (2) of the total number of wild pigs handled by the AFCD since it announced in November last year that it would capture and euthanise wild pigs appearing in urban areas;
- (3) whether it will raise the penalties for persons feeding wild pigs illegally, especially those doing so repeatedly, with a view to eradicating acts of feeding wild pigs illegally; if not, of the reasons for that; and
- (4) of the progress of AFCD's application of newly designed rubbish bins (e.g. those which can prevent wild pigs from tipping them over) at locations which are disturbed by wild pigs from time to time?

Reply:

President,

The Government has all along been very concerned about the nuisance and potential threats to the public caused by wild pigs. Incidents of wild pigs appearing and causing nuisance in urban areas have occurred more frequently in recent years, while injury cases caused by wild pigs have also shown a notable rise. Amongst the 45 injury cases caused by wild pigs recorded over the past 10 years (2012 to 2021), over 80 per cent (39 cases) occurred between 2018 and 2021. The surging trend in the aforementioned cases clearly shows that wild pigs have already posed very serious threats to public safety. Wild pigs are dangerous wild animals, especially those which have accustomed to scavenging and being fed in urban areas, or which are huge in size. When seeking food from members of the public, wild pigs may bite or

knock people down, or even harm other people nearby. At the same time, wild pigs may also transmit zoonotic diseases (such as tuberculosis, hepatitis E, influenza A and Streptococcus suis infection), thereby posing threats to public health. It is necessary for the Government to take decisive actions to tackle wild pig issues.

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip is as follows:

(1) & (2) To cope with the festering nuisance of wild pigs, under the premises of safeguarding public safety and maintaining public hygiene, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) announced new measures on November 12 last year. Regular wild pig capture operations will be conducted with priority given to sites with large numbers of wild pigs, and those sites with past injury cases or with wild pigs which may pose risks to members of the public. Furthermore, upon receiving reports about wild pig sightings in urban areas or residential areas from citizens or other government departments, the AFCD will also perform ad hoc operations to capture the wild pigs which pose potential danger or cause nuisance to members of the public. During the operations, the AFCD will use dart guns with anaesthetics to capture the wild pigs, and perform humane dispatch on the captured wild pigs through medicine injection. Taking account of all operations conducted by the AFCD since the announcement of the new measures on November 12 last year, as at January 12 this year, the AFCD has performed humane dispatch on a total of 38 wild pigs which caused nuisance in urban areas and near residential areas. The AFCD will continue to monitor the situation of wild pig sightings and assess the coverage and effectiveness of the capture operations in due course.

(3) As wild pig nuisance in recent years is largely caused by intentional feeding activities, the AFCD is exploring to amend the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170), with a view to expanding the feeding ban area for wild animals and stepping up control of feeding activities to minimise the pull factor drawing wild pigs to urban areas. In addition, the maximum penalty currently under the Ordinance is a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). In light of the relatively low amounts of fine in relevant precedent cases (ranging from \$200 to \$2,000), the AFCD will study how the amount of fine may be raised to enhance the deterrent effect.

Also, the AFCD has all along been striving to educate the public the importance of not feeding wild animals. Starting from November last year, the AFCD has rolled out a new public education and publicity campaign, with a view to stepping up its efforts to educate the public about the message of not feeding wild pigs, which includes uploading promotional and educational information on social media, putting up posters at certain MTR stations, bodies of trams and buses, tram stops and bus stops, etc. The campaign emphasises on how feeding wild pigs would change their behaviour by making some of these wild pigs accustomed to wandering into urban areas and refuse collection points, etc. to scavenge for food, which could affect environmental hygiene, lead to traffic accidents, transmit diseases, and even make them more aggressive in temper. The campaign also points out that over 30 injury cases caused by wild pigs involving over 40 casualties were

recorded over the past four years.

(4) To reduce nuisance caused to the public by wild pigs searching for food from outdoor refuse, the AFCD commissioned a consultancy study with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Environmental Protection Department to improve the design of litter containers. Results of the consultancy study suggested that two improved designs of litter containers, which can be fixed to the ground or lampposts/fences respectively, can effectively prevent wild pigs from pushing over them and scavenging for food inside. The consultancy study has been completed, and AFCD has provided the results of the study to relevant departments for their consideration. Relevant departments will install litter containers of the new designs at appropriate locations gradually based on the actual circumstances.

The AFCD will review the effectiveness of the new measures regularly, in order to ensure that they can reduce the nuisance caused by wild pigs to the public, safeguard public safety and maintain public hygiene.