

LCQ13: Environmental hygiene problems caused by wild birds

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (April 3):

Question:

I have received complaints from many members of the public that there are from time to time people feeding wild pigeons in public places, resulting in wild pigeons congregating and depositing large quantities of droppings, which has seriously affected environmental hygiene and posed health hazards to members of the public. The spots where wild pigeons congregate include an area underneath the flyover outside Mount Sterling Mall at Mei Foo Sun Chuen and the open space nearby (especially at dusk), and a footpath on Sha Kok Street adjacent to Sha Kok Estate (with more than 200 wild pigeons congregating at the most). Although the Sha Tin District Council has all along been requesting, in the past decade or so, the relevant government departments to take measures to tackle the problem of wild pigeons congregating, the situation has not been improved. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of complaints received by the authorities in each of the past three years about bird droppings causing environmental hygiene problems, with a breakdown by District Council district;
- (2) whether the authorities will step up law enforcement efforts and inspections to curb the acts of feeding wild birds; if so, of the details; and
- (3) apart from installing Internet Protocol cameras at the spots concerned to curb the acts of feeding wild birds, of the measures adopted by the authorities in the past three years to prevent wild birds congregating and the effectiveness of such measures; whether they will consider installing netting at those spots to prevent entry by wild birds; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

People who dirty public places by feeding birds, e.g. leaving residual feed on the ground, will contravene section 4(1) of the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation (Cap. 132BK). The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) may take enforcement actions against the offenders under the Fixed Penalty (Public Cleanliness and Obstruction) Ordinance (Cap. 570).

My reply to the Member's questions is as follows:

(1) The FEHD received 372, 478 and 474 complaints in 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 (as at February 2019) respectively against people who dirtied public places by feeding birds. The breakdown by District Council district is as follows:

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(2) and (3) The FEHD has set up 19 dedicated enforcement teams (DETs), primarily responsible for stepping up enforcement actions against various public cleanliness offences (including dirtying public places by feeding birds), and additional DETs will be set up in 2019. On top of regular enforcement actions, the FEHD arranges blitz prosecution by DETs to curb the illegal acts of dirtying public places by feeding birds.

Apart from providing routine street sweeping and washing services, the FEHD would increase the frequency of street washing and disinfect public places where wild birds congregate with diluted bleach solution as appropriate, so as to maintain environmental hygiene.

The proposal of installing fencing is subject to the decision of the venue management concerned. If feeding activities persist, the installation of fixed fencing may not necessarily be an effective solution for mobile

feeding behaviors as birds will still congregate in the vicinity of the fenced-off areas. The way to tackle the problem at its root is to promote the public awareness of refraining from feeding birds through enhanced public education.

The FEHD has been making appeals through various channels, including erecting warning signs and distributing pamphlets to the public to advise them to refrain from feeding and thus gathering wild birds in order to maintain environmental hygiene.

In addition, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) will continue to remind the public not to feed birds through various channels, including broadcasting new Announcements in the Public Interest on television and radio and microfilms on media platforms. A dedicated website (nofeeding.afcd.gov.hk) has been launched to enhance publicity. Furthermore, the AFCD has produced new banners, posters and pamphlets for displaying at locations where birds gather as well as for posting and distribution by government departments and private housing estates, and will continue to conduct roving exhibitions at different districts.