

LCQ14: Nuisances caused by wild pigs

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (March 13):

Question:

Recently, many members of the local community have relayed to me that the problem of wild pigs causing nuisances in the vicinity of Sheung Shui and Fanling districts has become increasingly serious with the areas where wild pigs are found extending to the entire North District, including rural residential areas, leisure and recreation parks, and even the Fanling Golf Course, and the Beas River Country Club of the Hong Kong Jockey Club. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of complaints about nuisances caused by wild pigs, the number of cases of wild pigs injuring people and the number of cases of wild pigs causing disruptions to shops resulting in property damage, as well as the average time taken by the personnel of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) to respond to the aforesaid cases, in each of the past five years, with a breakdown of such information by District Council district;

(2) given that the Government launched the pilot Capture and Contraception/Relocation Programme (CCRP) in 2017 to address the nuisances caused by wild pigs, of the number of operations conducted, as well as the respective numbers of wild pigs (i) captured and (ii) administered with contraceptive vaccine or surgically sterilised, under the CCRP so far, with a breakdown by District Council district;

(3) of the number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted against people who had illegally fed wild pigs since the Government extended "the places at which the feeding of any wild animal is prohibited" specified under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) to the entire territory of Hong Kong on December 31, 2022, as well as the penalties imposed on the convicted persons;

(4) given that since 2021, the AFCD has placed three types of wildlife-resistant refuse collection facilities at over 70 locations, whether the Government has assessed the effectiveness of such facilities so far (including whether they can reduce the nuisances caused by wild pigs to the community);

(5) whether it has studied new measures to reduce situations of wild pigs causing nuisances to residential areas and their intrusion into places where many people gather; and

(6) given that the Government has been committed to promoting the development

of a "smart city" in recent years, whether government departments have considered installing smart monitors in areas where wild pigs are found, so as to accurately measure and monitor the activity areas of wild pigs, and deploying manpower and taking corresponding control measures when necessary; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to reducing nuisance caused by wild pigs to the public through a multi-pronged approach, on the premises of safeguarding public safety and public hygiene. Since November 2021, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been regularly conducting operations to capture and humanely dispatch wild pigs in urban and rural areas where wild pigs have been sighted, incidents of human injuries caused by wild pigs have occurred before, or the wild pigs' presence may pose potential risks to the public. The AFCD will also take relevant actions as necessary upon receipt of reports from the public or other Government departments regarding wild pigs. In 2023, the AFCD further allocated resources to increase operation frequency and improve operation efficiency by installing Internet Protocol (IP) surveillance cameras and deploying new trapping devices. As of February 2024, the AFCD conducted over 410 capture operations and humanely dispatched over 910 wild pigs. In particular, in 2023, the average monthly number of wild pigs humanely dispatched was 41, which increased by about 70 per cent from the monthly average of 24 in 2022. According to the AFCD's statistics, the total population of wild pigs in 2023 was about 1 360, which decreased by approximately 26 per cent from around 1 830 in 2022. The number of wild pig nuisance blackspots decreased by approximately 50 per cent from 42 in 2022 to 21 in 2023. Human injury cases related to wild pigs also decreased by approximately 75 per cent from 36 cases in 2022 to nine cases in 2023.

Human feeding activities are one of the root causes of wild pig nuisance. With the expansion of the specified place where feeding wild animals is prohibited under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) (the feeding ban area) to the entire territory of Hong Kong starting from end-December 2022, the AFCD deploys staff to patrol at locations affected by wild pig nuisance and takes firm enforcement actions against illegal feeding. The AFCD also organises various public education activities (such as talks and exhibition booths) to explain to the public the negative impact and hazard of feeding wild animals, with over 19 000 members of the public participating in these activities in 2023. To further combat feeding activities, the Government introduced the Wild Animals Protection (Amendment) Bill 2023 (the Bill) to the Legislative Council in November 2023. The Bill proposed to increase the maximum penalty for feeding wild animals from a fine of \$10,000 to a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for one year, as well as introduce a fixed penalty system for illegal feeding with the penalty amount set at \$5,000. The legislative amendments, if passed, will come into operation on August 1, 2024.

In 2023, the AFCD received approximately 40 reports of wild pig occurrence in the North District, mainly involving small-scale agricultural lands. The AFCD has stepped-up site inspections in the areas concerned and maintained communication with farmers and managers of local recreational facilities, such as the Hong Kong Golf Club (the Club) operating the Fanling Golf Course, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) managing public parks, and the Jockey Club Beas River Country Club. The AFCD has offered advice on prevention of wild pig nuisance in accordance with the relevant situations, such as installing fences or enhancing lighting; putting in place infrared cameras at relevant locations to monitor wild pig activities; setting up traps at relevant locations (such as in the public park managed by the LCSD to the east of Fan Kam Road (i.e. the "Old Course" of the Fanling Golf Course)); issued special permit to the Club allowing the placement of traps to capture wild pigs, enabling the Club to successfully capture 23 wild pigs, which were handed over to the AFCD for humane dispatch.

Having consulted the AFCD, our replies to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Lau are as follows:

(1) Over the past five years, the numbers of reports received by the AFCD regarding wild pig sightings, nuisances, and incidents of human injuries by districts are tabulated as follows:

District	Number of reports on wild pig sightings or nuisance (Number of reports on human injury)				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Central and Western	123 (1)	83 (0)	163 (6)	110 (0)	91 (0)
Eastern	62 (0)	101 (0)	165 (6)	103 (18)	41 (0)
Islands	11 (0)	8 (0)	11 (0)	11 (0)	8 (0)
Kowloon City	11 (0)	10 (0)	15 (0)	6 (0)	5 (1)
Kwai Tsing	31 (0)	23 (0)	38 (0)	28 (0)	13 (0)
Kwun Tong	24 (0)	14 (0)	10 (0)	30 (0)	18 (0)
North	24 (0)	41 (0)	41 (0)	38 (0)	42 (0)
Sai Kung	170 (0)	128 (0)	208 (0)	191 (5)	181 (2)
Sha Tin	121 (1)	101 (0)	131 (0)	108 (6)	175 (1)
Sham Shui Po	23 (1)	5 (0)	7 (0)	23 (0)	26 (0)
Southern	257 (6)	185 (2)	292 (7)	184 (3)	109 (2)
Tai Po	82 (0)	84 (0)	108 (0)	91 (1)	197 (1)
Tsuen Wan	71 (0)	52 (1)	29 (0)	44 (3)	56 (0)
Tuen Mun	51 (0)	53 (0)	49 (0)	47 (0)	50 (0)
Wan Chai	76 (0)	50 (0)	75 (1)	68 (0)	56 (1)
Wong Tai Sin	23 (0)	28 (0)	17 (0)	19 (0)	21 (0)
Yau Tsim Mong	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)	1 (0)	1 (1)

Yuen Long	24 (0)	36 (0)	56 (0)	31 (0)	38 (0)
Total	1 184 (9)	1 002 (3)	1 417 (20)	1 133 (36)	1 128 (9)

If the AFCD receives reports of wild pigs trapped in urban or residential areas, the AFCD will immediately arrange for staff to capture the wild pigs at the concerned locations. For other reports of wild pig nuisance, the AFCD will generally contact the parties concerned within a week to understand the situation of the nuisance and offer relevant advice. If necessary, on-site investigations will be conducted promptly, and appropriate actions will be arranged to capture wild pigs that pose nuisances or potential risks to the public. The AFCD does not maintain information on property loss caused by wild pig nuisance.

(2) During the period from end-2017 to early November 2021, the AFCD implemented a Capture, Contraception/Relocation Programme (the Programme), in which captured wild pigs were administered contraceptive vaccines or surgically sterilised, and then relocated to rural areas. During the Programme, the AFCD organised over 350 operations in total, and a breakdown of the relevant figures by districts are tabulated as follows:

District	Number of wild pigs captured	Number of wild pigs administered with contraceptive vaccine or surgically sterilised
Islands	0	0
Kwai Ching	13	5
North	31	6
Sai Kung	144	75
Sha Tin	123	63
Tai Po	101	62
Tsuen Wan	33	7
Tuen Mun	28	18
Yuen Long	6	3
Kowloon City	3	0
Kwun Tong	2	1
Sham Shui Po	6	1
Wong Tai Sin	9	0
Yau Tsim Mong	0	0
Central and Western	104	27
Eastern	108	34
Southern	335	131
Wan Chai	46	25

Total	1 092	458
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However, the AFCD's investigations revealed that the rate of contraception and sterilisation was far behind the breeding rate of wild pigs. Moreover, once wild pigs became accustomed to being fed by humans, they would continue to return to urban or residential areas relentlessly to seek food from humans even after being relocated to rural areas. Therefore, in November 2021, the AFCD implemented a new measure, namely the aforementioned operation of capture and humane dispatch of wild pigs to replace the Programme.

(3) Since the expansion of the feeding ban area to the entire territory of Hong Kong from December 31, 2022, as of February 2024, the AFCD took enforcement actions against 210 individuals involved in illegal feeding of wild animals. Among them, 30 individuals involved in illegal feeding of wild pigs, and 17 of them were successfully convicted, with fines ranging from \$500 to \$1,000. The remaining cases are still being processed.

(4) In 2019, the AFCD commissioned the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) to design three types of refuse collection facilities that can prevent wild animal nuisances based on the characteristics of wild pigs and monkeys, which complied with the general refuse collection procedures of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). According to the survey conducted by the PolyU at the pilot spots, 80 per cent of users considered that the new design could effectively reduce nuisances caused by wild animals. The effectiveness of the new design also depends on whether the public use the facilities concerned correctly, such as not to leave the lid of the refuse collection bins opened. The FEHD has posted notices at the relevant facilities to strengthen publicity and education.

Since September 2022, the FEHD has installed approximately 450 of the above newly designed refuse collection facilities that can reduce wild animal nuisance at various locations across different districts affected by wild animal nuisance, including the Central and Western District, the Southern District, and the Sai Kung District. The FEHD will continue to install these facilities, with the aim of installing a total of about 990 units in Hong Kong by the first half of 2024.

(5) and (6) The AFCD has installed nearly 100 infrared cameras at locations with wild pig nuisance to record their numbers and occurrence, in order to arrange appropriate actions, including installation of new trapping devices or organising capture operations, with a view to further improving the efficiency of capturing wild pigs. The AFCD has also installed infrared cameras at specific blackspots of illegal feeding to detect illegal feeding activities, gather information and arrange enforcement actions. The AFCD will continue to closely monitor suitable technologies available on the market to enhance the capability of surveillance and management of wild pigs. The AFCD will also engage expert(s) in wildlife management to review the local situation of wild pig problem and learn from the experiences of other regions, with the aim of formulating a more comprehensive and effective

action plan for wild pig management.