

LCQ17: Rodent prevention and control

Following is a question by the Hon Wilson Or and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (July 7):

Question:

Quite a number of members of the public have criticised that rodent infestation is serious in various districts across the territory, and that the Rodent Infestation Rates compiled by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) have failed to reflect the actual situation of rodent infestation in various districts. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the FEHD has, since the second half of last year, increased the number of survey locations for the Rodent Infestation Survey from 41 to 50, whether it has reviewed if 50 survey locations are sufficient; if it has reviewed and the outcome is in the negative, whether it will further increase the number of survey locations; if it will not, of the reasons for that;

(2) of the latest progress of the application of new technologies or methods by the FEHD for rodent prevention and control, including the new technologies or methods which (i) are currently being tested, (ii) have been proved effective after testing, and (iii) have been or will be fully applied in various districts; the new measures in place to step up rodent prevention and control before the relevant new technologies or methods are fully applied; and

(3) given that some members of the public have relayed that the poor hygiene conditions in quite a number of districts have resulted in serious rodent infestation, whether the FEHD will supervise its cleaning service contractors to step up cleaning operations at rodent and hygiene black spots?

Reply:

President,

(1) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) makes public the Rodent Infestation Rates (RIRs) of all 18 districts in the territory on a half-yearly basis with survey locations covering three main kinds of biotopes, namely residential areas, rear lanes and industrial areas. These locations include public places under the purview of the FEHD and venues managed by various government departments (such as the Housing Department, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Education Bureau and the Department of Health). The FEHD increased the number of survey locations covered by the Rodent Infestation Survey (RIS) from 41 (around 2 300 baiting points) to 50 (around 2 700 baiting points) last year, and released the RIRs of all 50 survey locations for 2020 this year to enhance transparency and

reflect the rodent infestation situation of individual survey locations.

The FEHD will conduct regular reviews on the number of survey locations for the RIS to take account of urban development, and increase resources in a timely manner. As for the existing survey locations, the FEHD will review their coverage on a yearly basis having regard to factors such as urban development, views of local communities and changes in their RIRs, and make necessary adjustments to improve the surveillance programme.

(2) To enhance the effectiveness of rodent prevention and control, the FEHD has sought to strengthen rodent surveillance through the application of suitable technologies, and introduced suitable baits, rodent traps and bait boxes for deployment in different settings. The details and timetable for introducing various technologies/methods of rodent surveillance and control by the FEHD in recent years are set out at Annex.

(3) In recent years, the FEHD has substantially increased the resources for street cleaning work to maintain environmental hygiene, including engaging cleaning contractors for provision of services such as street sweeping and washing. To tackle the rodent infestation problems as a result of poor environmental hygiene in rear lanes in some districts, the FEHD has set up 24 additional dedicated cleaning teams to handle junk and refuse in rear lanes under outsourcing contracts, increased the use of street washing vehicles and high pressure hot water cleaners for washing rear lanes, and strengthened law enforcement against improper waste disposal (e.g. food remnants) by food premises. Targeting "three-nil" buildings and other private buildings where there are no refuse collection facilities, since the first quarter of 2021, the FEHD has been providing large covered rubbish bins from dusk to dawn at public areas (e.g. pavements) near such buildings for temporary use by residents for disposal of garbage on a trial basis. The FEHD will clear the bins in a timely manner and strengthen public education, with a view to enhancing environmental hygiene at relevant districts and eliminating the food sources of rodents as far as possible.

To ensure that the service performance of its outsourced contractors meets the contract requirements, the FEHD monitors their performance by conducting regular spot checks and surprise inspections. The FEHD maintains effective communication with its outsourced contractors for timely follow-up and improvement in issues relating to environmental hygiene and rodent infestation.