

LCQ19: Preventing wild animals from causing injuries and nuisances to residents

Following is a question by Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

It has been reported that nuisances have been caused to members of the public by wild animals from time to time, including monkeys trespassing on residential areas, and some passers-by being hit by wild pigs and sustaining injuries. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the respective numbers of (i) monkeys and (ii) wild pigs in each of the past five years;

(2) whether it knows the respective numbers of cases in each of the past five years of wild animals causing (i) injuries and (ii) nuisances to residents, with a breakdown by type of animals and district;

(3) whether it has assessed the effectiveness of the various neutering/contraceptive programmes for wild animals currently put in place in controlling the number of wild animals; if so, of the outcome; of the (i) amount of public money spent on and (ii) manpower deployed for the implementation of such programmes by the Government in the past five years, with a breakdown by type of animals involved;

(4) given that a contractor will carry out on-site trials early this year to assess the effectiveness of the newly designed refuse collection facilities in preventing wild animals such as monkeys and wild pigs from foraging food from refuse, of the number of designs involved in the trials; if only one design is involved, the reasons for that, and whether trials will be conducted on more designs; if so, of the details and the timetable; if not, the reasons for that; of the time as planned by the Government when it will completely switch to using the newly designed refuse collection facilities; whether it will expedite the use of such facilities; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) as the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department is conducting a series of publicity and education programmes to publicise the negative impacts of feeding wild animals, whether the Government will step up the relevant publicity and education efforts as well as consider legislating against the feeding of wild animals; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been very concerned about the nuisance to the public caused by wildlife (especially wild pigs and monkeys). The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has recently reviewed the strategy on the management of wild pigs and briefed the relevant panel of the Legislative Council on the proposed measures to strengthen the management of wild pigs in this January. The AFCD will also review the management of monkeys and handling of its nuisance.

Our reply to the question raised by Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat is as follows:

(1) Based on the data collected from the territory-wide surveys on monkeys by the AFCD, the number of monkeys has remained at about 1 800 in the past five years, and they are mainly distributed in the Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks.

Since wild pigs are generally solitary or live in small groups, secretive in nature, widely distributed and have very extensive home range, the AFCD does not have the number of wild pigs in Hong Kong at present. Nevertheless, the AFCD is exploring other methods to estimate the number of the wild pigs in Hong Kong.

(2) Over the past five years, the number of sightings or nuisance complaints and injury cases related to monkeys and wild pigs received by the AFCD is tabulated as follows:

Calendar Year	Number of Sightings or Nuisance Complaints / (Injury Cases) (Note 1)						
	Monkeys (Note 2)			Wild Pigs			
	Kowloon	New Territories	Total	Hong Kong Island	Kowloon	New Territories	Total
2014	82	355	437	125	18	193	336(0)
2015	148	402	550	223	33	262	518(0)
2016	104	343	447	219(2)	52	312	583(2)
2017	86	267	353	324	32	382(3)	738(3)
2018	59	271	330	482(3)	35(1)	412(3)	929(7)

Note 1: Figures in brackets denote the number of reports on injury

Note 2: There were no sightings or nuisance related to monkeys on the Hong Kong Island.

(3) Since 2007, the AFCD has regularly arranged contraceptive and sterilisation operations for monkeys in Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks, and monitored the changes in monkey populations so as to control their number in the long run and abate the nuisance they created. In

2009, the contractor introduced a new technique for permanent sterilisation of suitable female monkeys by endoscopic micro-tubectomy for more effective control on their number. In 2014, the contractor also started performing endoscopic micro-vasectomy on suitable male monkeys. The surgical procedure only takes four to seven minutes to complete, and the monkeys which undergone operations will be released on site together with other monkeys captured on the same day. Since 2018, the AFCD has extended the sterilisation operations to the monkey populations causing nuisance to residential areas near the fringe of country parks. As of February 2019, more than 2 200 monkeys had received contraception and/or sterilisation. Since the implementation of the programme, the number of complaints on nuisance drastically decreased from some 1 400 cases in 2006 to about 330 cases in 2018. The AFCD will soon review the management of monkey nuisance, with a view to developing a more comprehensive management plan for monkey nuisance.

Since 2017, the AFCD has introduced the Capture and Contraception/Relocation Programme (CCRP) as a pilot scheme to address persistent wild pig nuisance in urban areas. The pilot CCRP involves capturing the nuisance-causing wild pigs for relocation to remote countryside areas to alleviate the nuisance with immediate effect. To control the number of wild pigs causing nuisance in the long run, the AFCD is evaluating the effectiveness of a contraceptive vaccine, GonaCon™, in controlling the fertility of mature female wild pigs. GonaCon™ has been found to be effective for at least four to six years on captive wild pigs in an overseas study and is safe to pregnant animals. In addition, the AFCD has been studying the feasibility of conducting on-site surgical sterilisation on wild pigs. As of February 2019, the AFCD has vaccinated 55 wild pigs and sterilised 15 wild pigs, and relocated 111 wild pigs to the remote countryside. The AFCD will work closely with local and overseas experts to improve the procedures for the pilot CCRP and will assess the effectiveness of contraceptive treatment.

Over the past five years, the expenditure and staffing involved in the Capture, Contraception, and Release/Relocation Programme for monkeys and the pilot CCRP for wild pigs are tabulated below:

Financial Year	Monkeys		Wild Pigs	
	Expenditure (\$ million)	Manpower (number of staff)*	Expenditure # (\$ million)	Manpower # (number of staff)
2014-15	1.4	2	—	—
2015-16	1.4	2	—	—
2016-17	1.4	2	—	—
2017-18	1.4	2	3.8	6
2018-19 (Revised estimate)	1.4	2	6.4	14

*10 staff of the contractor participated/will participate in each operation

#Prior to 2017-18, there was no manpower dedicated for wild pig management

(4) In collaboration with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Environmental Protection Department, the AFCD is conducting a consultancy study to improve the design of the refuse bins, with a view to reducing nuisance caused by wild animals such as monkeys and wild pigs scavenging from outdoor refuse. The consultant provided three improved designs, which will be deployed for field trials in the first half of 2019 in areas of wildlife nuisance black spots, and further improvements will be made based on the trial results this year. The FEHD will keep in view the trial results and usage of the new designs. If the new designs can effectively minimise the scavenging for food from refuse bins by wild pigs and monkeys, the FEHD will deploy the newly designed bins to suitable sites to improve environmental hygiene as and when appropriate.

(5) The most effective way to minimise wildlife such as monkeys and wild pigs raiding residential areas is to stop feeding them. To this end, the AFCD is conducting a series of publicity and education programmes to intensify its efforts to educate the public on the negative impact of feeding on wildlife with a view to discouraging such feeding behavior. These programmes include promotion in the media and social platforms, organisation of colouring competition, fun day, roving exhibitions, lectures, wildlife education tours, as well as hanging banners and posters at areas frequented by monkeys and wild pigs.

As we have to make careful consideration of complicated technical issues involving law enforcement and the manpower required, the Government does not have any plan to completely ban the feeding of wild animals by legislative measures at the moment. To facilitate the management of wild pigs, the Government will set up an advisory group comprising local and overseas experts in the fields of ecology, wildlife management and veterinary medicine, etc. to advise on the implementation and review of management measures and public education.