

LCQ19: Rodent prevention and control

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (April 27):

Question:

It has been reported that the overall Rodent Infestation Rate for 2021 announced earlier by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has failed to reflect the actual situation of rodent infestation, and rodent infestation is still extensive in hygiene black spots (e.g. markets) in many districts. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of complaints about rodent infestation received by the FEHD in each month of last year, with a breakdown by District Council (DC) districts;

(2) of the respective numbers of dead rodents collected and live rodents caught during the year-end clean-up operation conducted by the FEHD early this year, with a breakdown by DC districts;

(3) given that the FEHD piloted an enhanced version of the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas in Sham Shui Po, Wan Chai and Yuen Long at the end of last year, of the details and effectiveness of the operations concerned;

(4) given that at present, the FEHD conducts two rounds of territory-wide anti-rodent campaigns and anti-rodent operations in designated target areas every year, whether the Government will regularise the two anti-rodent operations and conduct them on a monthly basis instead; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) of the public markets under the FEHD in which intensive anti-rodent operations were conducted last year, as well as the details and effectiveness of such operations;

(6) whether it will extend the rodent control pilot scheme implemented in Yeung Uk Road Market, Tsuen Wan to markets and cooked food hawker bazaars in Sham Shui Po and Yau Tsim Mong District; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(7) whether it will re-launch the territory-wide cleansing campaign in order to step up efforts on rodent prevention and control; if so, of the timetable and scale of the campaign; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the question raised by the Hon Vincent Cheng is as follows:

(1) The numbers of rodent infestation complaints received by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) by District Council (DC) districts in each month in 2021 are at Annex 1.

(2) The numbers of dead rodents collected and live rodents caught by the FEHD in 2021 by DC districts are at Annex 2. The FEHD does not keep separate breakdowns of the figures on dead rodents collected and live rodents caught during the year-end clean-up campaign.

(3), (4) and (7) Apart from the routine anti-rodent work, the FEHD conducts two rounds of territory-wide and inter-departmental anti-rodent campaign each year, with each round lasting for 10 weeks. The objectives of the campaign are to step up rodent prevention and control in target areas and to remind the public of the importance of rodent prevention and control. The first round of the territory-wide and inter-departmental anti-rodent campaign for 2022 was launched on January 3; and the second round will commence on July 4. During the campaign, the FEHD will, in collaboration with the relevant departments, strengthen inspections and carry out anti-rodent work in target places in the territory (including public markets/municipal services buildings, hawker bazaars, typhoon shelters and lanes adjacent to food premises, etc.).

To intensify rodent prevention and control work in all districts, the FEHD conducts two rounds of eight-week anti-rodent operations in designated target areas immediately after each round of the territory-wide and inter-departmental anti-rodent campaign starting from 2017. Based on an array of factors, such as the Rodent Infestation Rate, the number of rodent infestation complaints, district feedback, etc., the FEHD designates target areas. Measures will then be taken to enhance the environmental hygiene and step up the anti-rodent and related enforcement work in the areas, in a bid to control rodent infestation in a more focused manner.

In 2021, the FEHD conducted two rounds of anti-rodent operations in designated target areas in May and November respectively. An enhanced version of the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas was featured, for the first time, in Sham Shui Po, Wan Chai and Yuen Long Districts during the second round of the operations. Under the enhanced version of the operations, the scope of rodent control was expanded. Large-scale and targeted anti-rodent operations were conducted in more rodent black spots, including public markets, municipal services buildings as well as hawker bazaars and rear lanes adjacent to food premises, etc. Compared with the first round of the operations in the same year, the enhanced version of the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas launched in the aforesaid three districts has recorded improved overall effectiveness. Amongst, there were significant improvements in rat holes filling, dead rodents collection and poisonous baits placement, etc. under the enhanced version of the operations during the second round.

In 2022, the FEHD will conduct the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas in May and October respectively. It plans to carry out the enhanced version of the operations mentioned above in Central and Western, Southern, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon City, Tsuen Wan and Tai Po Districts during the first round of the operations in May.

Currently, the two rounds of territory-wide and inter-departmental anti-rodent campaign and anti-rodent operations in designated target areas conducted every year, on top of the routine anti-rodent work, last for a total of 36 weeks. The prevailing arrangements are considered effective and capable of attracting the community and the public to respond to and to take part in the anti-rodent operations. The FEHD has no plan to launch these anti-rodent operations on a monthly basis at this stage.

The FEHD is also committed to strengthening routine anti-rodent work. The Financial Secretary announced in the 2022-23 Budget Speech that a total funding of \$500 million would be allocated within two years for the FEHD to enhance environmental hygiene services, including stepping up measures on rodent control. In this connection, the FEHD will initiate territory-wide night rodent control operations in all districts, including forming the overnight rodent control teams and setting rodent traps in the small hours in 2022-23 and 2023-24 with a view to strengthening rodent prevention and control at black spots in the districts.

In addition to the aforementioned anti-rodent operations, the Government has all along been committed to enhancing its work on environmental cleanliness and pest control and raising public awareness on environmental hygiene. The FEHD carries out the territory-wide and inter-departmental anti-mosquito campaigns, the year-end clean-up campaigns, etc. every year. It will continue to closely monitor the hygienic condition of each district and carry out clean-up and pest control campaigns in the territory when circumstances so require.

(5) Since 2020, the FEHD has been progressively rolling out the intensive anti-rodent operation at its public markets. At present, the operation covers 73 FEHD's markets with relatively high patronage rate. A list of these markets is at Annex 3. Specifically, FEHD's contractors will thoroughly clear the refuse and clean the passageways and drains in the markets every night after their opening hours so as to eliminate food sources of rodents. Traps will also be placed extensively in market areas in the small hours to strengthen anti-rodent efforts. The FEHD also requires market stall tenants to complement its efforts by conducting cleansing and disinfection at their stalls, clearing their disused articles, and putting their goods (especially food items) in proper storage, so as to keep their stalls and the common areas in a clean and sanitary condition and eliminate rodents' food sources and hiding places.

For the markets concerned, after the commencement of the intensive anti-rodent operation, the total number of dead rodents collected and live rodents caught has increased by about 20 per cent on average; while the number of complaints has decreased by about 20 per cent on average. It demonstrates the

effectiveness of the operation.

After summarising the experience and effectiveness of the operation and making reference to the views of overseas rodent experts, the FEHD has decided to extend the intensive anti-rodent operation to all of the 96 public markets and 11 hawker bazaars under its management by end-May 2022.

(6) To further improve the hygiene of public markets, the FEHD has geared with the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) to launch a pilot scheme in Yeung Uk Road Market, Tsuen Wan. Under the pilot scheme, the Internet of Things solution will be deployed to strategically set up wireless motion detection sensors, rodent traps, bait boxes, etc for stepping up the monitoring of rodent infestation in markets and improving rodent prevention and control work, so that more focused improvement measures and follow-up actions can be taken. The FEHD has been installing these rodent control devices in phases, with a view to implementing the scheme in June 2022. Subject to its effectiveness, the FEHD and the EMSD will consider whether to further expand the scheme.