

LCQ2: Prevention and control of ants

Following is a question by Dr Hon Helena Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

It has been reported that a scholar in biology and ecology found ants belonging to the species of *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* in Hung Hom in November last year. The scholar pointed out that such species of ants was non-native to Hong Kong and would build nests in buildings. It would be difficult to eradicate the species if its population was to proliferate. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it found any *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* ants in Hong Kong last year; if so, set out the relevant details by district;
- (2) whether it will regularly monitor if ants of such species are found in various districts and publish the relevant data; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) of the measures in place to assist the public in dealing with the situation in which ants of such species are found at home and the community;
- (4) of the measures in place to enable the public to grasp more information on whether the various species of ants are harmful to human being; and
- (5) whether it will draw reference from overseas countries' quarantine work carried out on inbound aircraft and vessels, with a view to preventing the invasion of non-native pests; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(1) and (2) *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* is a general nuisance pest originated from South America. Like other ant species, *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* is not a vector for transmission of human diseases and poses no threat to public health, building structures or ecological environment. The Government therefore does not regularly monitor its whereabouts. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) received a report of *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* at an estate in Hung Hom in mid-December last year. Apart from that, the Government did not receive any other report of such species of ant in other places of Hong Kong.

(3) and (4) Handling of *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* is no different from that of ants in general. As sweet food attracts ants, keeping homes clean and

storing sweet food in tightly sealed containers can avoid inviting ants. If ants are found at home, control measures targeted on household ants may be used, and appropriate registered pesticides may be applied when necessary. Professional pest control companies may be hired to provide ant control services.

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has provided on its website [information on ants and ant control measures](#) as well as [information on selecting a pest control company](#) for easy reference.

(5) Currently, plant quarantine measures implemented in Hong Kong aim at controlling plant pests. According to the Plant (Importation and Pest Control) Ordinance (Cap. 207), no person shall import any plant pest or any plant infected by or infested with a plant pest unless authorised by the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation. AFCD is responsible for the enforcement of the Ordinance with the assistance of the Customs and Excise Department. Plant Health Inspectors of AFCD stationed at entry points inspect consignments of imported plants, plant products and growing medium to ensure that they are accompanied by valid import documents and free from plant pests. If pests are found in a consignment, AFCD will reject its import and order to carry out quarantine treatment or destroy the consignment. The Government will continue to keep abreast of studies on prevention of non-native pest invasion, draw reference from other places and take appropriate measures as and when required.