

LCQ22: Pet hospice services

Following is a question by the Hon Lillian Kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

The Census and Statistics Department conducted a survey on the keeping of dogs and cats in 2018, and the data showed that the total number of dogs/cats kept by households had increased by almost 40 per cent as compared to that in 2005. It is learnt that the public demand for pet hospice services also increased during the period. However, following the Government's cessation of public cremation services for animals in 1999, members of the public can only choose to dispose of animal carcasses or patronize operators of animal hospice services. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has compiled statistics on the respective numbers of households and persons keeping dogs and cats as well as the numbers of dogs and cats involved, in each of the past five years (set out in a table); among such dogs, the number of those which have been microchipped;
- (2) of the number of animal carcasses collected by the refuse collection points of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department as well as the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department in each of the past five years, with a breakdown by animal type;
- (3) as it has been learnt that quite a number of animal hospice service operators are providing pet cremation services in industrial buildings, which involves breaches of land lease, whether the Government will consider reviewing the requirements for such operators in the relevant lease conditions; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (4) of the number of complaints received by the Government relating to animal hospice service operators in each of the past five years; and
- (5) whether the Government will study the enactment of legislation to regulate the operation of animal cremation service operators so as to coordinate and manage premises for animal hospice services, and the establishment of a licensing mechanism for such operators; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

President,

Reply:

President,

Having consulted relevant government departments, the reply to the

question raised by the Hon Lilian Kwok is as follows:

(1) According to the most recent Thematic Household Survey on keeping of dogs and cats conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2018, some 241 900 households were keeping dogs or cats in Hong Kong, with an average household size of 2.9 members, representing 9.4 per cent of all households. A total of some 184 100 cats and 221 100 dogs were being kept.

Regarding the implantation of microchips, under the Rabies Regulation (Cap. 421A), dogs aged over five months are required to be implanted with microchips and licensed. According to the data of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), between 2018 and 2022, the numbers of dogs that are implanted with microchips and licensed are 164 851, 164 854, 160 950, 165 133 and 168 764 respectively.

(2) In the past five years (2018-2022), the numbers of animal carcasses collected by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) from its refuse collection points and through other means are tabulated as below –

Year	No. of dog carcasses	No. of cat carcasses	No. of carcasses of other animals (Note 1)	Total
2018	5 343	8 192	12 258	25 793
2019	2 795	5 702	12 335	20 832
2020	1 890	3 689	11 625	17 204
2021	1 232	2 935	14 415	18 582
2022	732	1 444	9 837	12 013

Note 1: Including rabbits, tortoises, hamsters, snakes, and wild pigs, etc.

The AFCD does not provide animal carcass collection services. If animal carcasses are found during inspections by AFCD officers, they will be referred to the FEHD for follow-up.

(4) In the past five years (2018-2022), the numbers of complaints received by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), the FEHD, the Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Lands Department (LandsD) related to animal hospice service providers are tabulated as below:

Departments	Matters of complaint	Numbers of complaints (Note 2)				
		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
EPD	Emission of smoke or odour	15	7	6	8	13
FEHD	Sanitary nuisance	0	0	0	0	3

FSD	Over-storage of dangerous goods or breach of fire safety	2	1	0	1	1
LandsD	Breach of lease conditions	3	6	0	1	1
Total		20	14	6	10	18

Note 2: As a single complaint may have been handled by more than one department, the figures reported by individual departments may overlap.

(3)&(5) As in other trades, animal hospice service providers have to comply with the relevant legislations and lease conditions. The relevant government departments may, according to their respective mandates, inspect premises of pet hospice services to check compliance with pertinent legislations and requirements, as well as lease conditions.

Upon receipt of complaints about sanitary nuisance from premises of pet hospice services, the FEHD will inspect the premises concerned and, where necessary, take enforcement actions under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132). For complaints about black smoke or odour emitted in the process of cremating pet carcasses, the EPD will carry out inspections and take enforcement actions according to the Air Pollution Control Ordinance (Cap. 311) as necessary. Inspections and enforcement actions as required may also be carried out by the FSD pursuant to the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95) and the Dangerous Goods Ordinance (Cap. 295).

As regards lease conditions, the LandsD will conduct follow-up inspections on complaints received involving breach of lease conditions, and if verified, the LandsD will take lease enforcement actions, including issuing warning letters to the owners demanding purge of lease breaches within a specific timeframe. If the owners do not rectify the breaches in time, the LandsD may register the warning letter at the Land Registry (commonly known as "imposing an encumbrance"). For cases involving serious breaches which may pose serious or immediate threats to public safety, the LandsD may re-enter the relevant lots or vest the relevant interests in the Government.

Considering that existing legislations and lease conditions can already regulate issues such as air pollution, public health and fire safety, etc. that may arise from the operation of animal hospice service providers, the Government has currently no plan to introduce a licensing regime to regulate the relevant trade.