

## LCQ8: Feeding of wild animals

Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (January 15):

Question:

The newly amended Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170), which came into operation on August 1 last year, expands the prohibition on feeding of wild animals to cover feral pigeons. Regarding the prohibition on feeding wild animals, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the law enforcement mechanism (including the circumstances under which joint enforcement operations will be undertaken) and the human resources allocated (including staff establishment and the number of outsourced personnel) of the inter-departmental working group on feeding ban enforcement (the Working Group) established by the Government; the respective numbers of patrols and joint enforcement operations conducted each month to combat illegal feeding of wild animals since the establishment of the Working Group, as well as the average cost of each operation; how the Government assesses the effectiveness of the aforesaid enforcement operations;

(2) regarding illegal feeding of feral pigeons, of the respective numbers of reports received and fixed penalty notices issued by the relevant departments in each month since August last year and, among them, the respective numbers of those involving feeding of feral pigeons in private places (such as residential premises) and the number of successful prosecutions;

(3) whether it has compiled statistics on the changes in the number of feral pigeons at black spots of feral pigeon congregation in each month after the aforesaid amendments to Cap. 170 came into operation as compared with the figures for the same period in the previous year, together with a breakdown by the 18 districts across the territory; and

(4) of the number of reports received by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department in the past three years of illegal feeding of wild pigs, as well as the respective numbers of cases of wild pig sightings and human injuries caused by wild pigs, together with a breakdown by urban and rural areas; as it is learnt that recently, there have been frequent incidents of wild pigs causing nuisances to rural agricultural land and even human injuries, whether the Government has assessed the annual average economic losses resulting from wild pig damage to agricultural land, and reviewed the effectiveness of the existing measures to prohibit feeding of wild pigs, so as to minimise such losses; whether it will consider drawing reference from the practices of the Mainland and other regions to compensate farmers whose agricultural land has been damaged; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Wild Animals Protection (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 (Amendment Ordinance) came into operation on August 1, 2024, expanding the territory-wide prohibition on feeding of wild animals to cover feral pigeons, increasing the maximum penalty for illegal feeding to a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for one year, and introducing a fixed penalty of \$5,000, with a view to further combating illegal feeding activities, thereby mitigating the problems of ecological imbalance and environmental hygiene so caused. To strengthen law enforcement, the Amendment Ordinance expanded the scope of the Government's enforcement officers, covering appointed officers of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the Housing Department (HD), in addition to officers of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and police officers under the original arrangement. In the first month after the commencement of the Amendment Ordinance (i.e. August 2024), enforcement officers would first give verbal warnings to individuals involved in illegal feeding of wild animals or feral pigeons. Starting from September 1, 2024, immediate enforcement actions will be taken without prior warnings.

Apart from strengthening deterrence through legislative amendments, the AFCD has also launched a series of publicity and education activities with the theme of "All For No Feeding", including extensive advertisements, release of promotional videos, setting up of education booths, display of banners and posters and distribution of leaflets at feeding black spots, so as to inform the public about the latest feeding ban regulations and the negative impacts of feeding animals.

Having consulted the AFCD, the FEHD, the LCSD and the HD, our replies to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Ho are as follows:

(1) The AFCD, in collaboration with the FEHD, the LCSD, and the HD, have established an inter-departmental working group on feeding ban enforcement (the Working Group). Through regular meetings, the Working Group reviews and enhances enforcement strategies and implementation of the feeding ban, with a view to continuously enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement. The relevant departments adopt a risk-based enforcement strategy, and enforcement officers will take resolute enforcement action against any person violating the feeding ban during routine patrols of venues under their purviews or public places. Besides, relevant departments conduct patrols and take corresponding enforcement actions against illegal feeding activities at different locations across the territory based on intelligence and public reports received. The Working Group will arrange joint enforcement operations when necessary, for example, at feeding black spots under multiple departments' purviews, or areas where feeding situation is relatively severe or complicated.

About 870 frontline enforcement officers from the relevant departments are involved in enforcing the feeding ban, all of which are government

officers. No contractor staff is involved in the enforcement work.

From August to December 2024, the number of patrols and joint enforcement operations conducted by the relevant departments in response to public reports of feeding wild animals and feral pigeons are tabulated by months as follows. Since enforcement of the feeding ban is a part of the routine work of the relevant departments, the Government does not maintain information on the average cost of each operation.

2024	August	September	October	November	December
Number of patrols*	437	473	458	531	481
Number of joint enforcement operations	0	7	3	5	3

\*The numbers of patrols did not include the numbers of routine patrols conducted by relevant departments at venues under their purviews or public places.

The Government will assess the effectiveness of the enforcement of the feeding ban by monitoring the numbers of wild animals and feral pigeons, evaluating the latest situations of the feeding black spots, and analysing relevant complaint figures.

Wild animals (such as wild pigs and monkeys) and feral pigeons can forage for food on their own, but they may require time to look for and adapt to new habitats and foraging areas. More time is required to observe the effectiveness of the Amendment Ordinance in reducing the congregation of wild animals and feral pigeons. The Government will continue to strengthen enforcement of the feeding ban, and continuously review and timely optimise the arrangements for enforcement actions as well as the management measures for wild animals and feral pigeons.

(2) From August to December 2024, the number of public reports received and fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued by the relevant departments regarding illegal feeding of feral pigeons/wild birds is tabulated by months as follows:

2024	Involves feeding of feral pigeons/wild birds# across the entire territory (including public and private places) (Involves feeding feral pigeons/wild birds in private places #)				
	August	September	October	November	December

Number of public reports received	276 (52)	257 (77)	272 (110)	269 (118)	294 (109)
Number of FPNs issued	0 (0)	16 (4)	26 (4)	18 (3)	18 (1)

#Cases of illegal feeding of feral pigeons often also involve illegal feeding of wild birds, and vice versa, hence no breakdown figures.

(3) Before the Amendment Ordinance came into operation, the AFCD, in consultation with the FEHD, the LCSD, and the HD, listed 42 locations as monitoring points of feral pigeon congregation for indicative reference, in accordance with factors including the receipt of three or more complaints on feral pigeon nuisance within any one-year period at least during the past three years, congregation of a considerable number of feral pigeons, and unsatisfactory environmental hygiene conditions. The distribution of these monitoring points across the 18 districts in Hong Kong is tabulated as follows:

District	Number of monitoring points for feral pigeon congregation
Central and Western	8
Wan Chai	3
Eastern	3
Southern	3
Yau Tsim Mong	3
Sham Shui Po	3
Kowloon City	3
Wong Tai Sin	2
Kwun Tong	3
Kwai Tsing	2
Tsuen Wan	1
Tuen Mun	1
Yuen Long	2
North	1
Tai Po	1
Sha Tin	1
Sai Kung	1
Islands	1

Before the Amendment Ordinance came into operation, the AFCD did not

conduct regular survey on feral pigeon population, and thus it was unable to provide the statistics for the same period last year for comparison on the changes in the numbers of feral pigeons at the identified congregation black spots. However, the AFCD conducted on-site inspections of the 42 monitoring points for feral pigeon congregation in August 2024. Based on the numbers of feral pigeons observed, the levels of feral pigeon congregation at these locations were categorised as high (over 30), medium (10 to 30), and low (fewer than 10). In December 2024, the AFCD reviewed again the latest conditions of the 42 monitoring points, and its preliminary assessments found that more than half of these locations had low level of feral pigeon congregation. To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the feeding ban in alleviating feral pigeon nuisance, the AFCD will conduct regular surveys of feral pigeon population starting from 2025. At the same time, the department will also continue to review the latest conditions of each monitoring point, and make appropriate adjustments to the relevant management measures as necessary.

Furthermore, in the early stage following the implementation of the Amendment Ordinance, the AFCD specifically enhanced publicity and education at the monitoring points, including setting up education booths and distributing leaflets, bringing the message of "All For No Feeding" into the community. From August 1 to December 31, 2024, relevant departments conducted about 790 times of patrols at the monitoring points and issued 23 FPNs.

(4) Over the past three years, the numbers of public reports of illegal feeding of wild pigs, sighting of or nuisance caused by wild pigs, and human injury caused by wild pigs received by the AFCD are tabulated by the categories of urban and rural areas as follows:

	Urban area/rural area		
	2022	2023	2024
Number of reports of illegal feeding of wild pigs	not applicable <sup>6</sup>	34/49	60/53
Number of reports of wild pig sighting or nuisance	557/576	443/685	411/687
Number of human injury case caused by wild pigs	11/25	4/5	2/5

<sup>6</sup>The feeding ban area under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance was expanded to cover the entire territory of Hong Kong since December 31, 2022.

The AFCD adopts multipronged measures in addressing the issue of wild pigs, including capturing and humanely dispatching wild pigs that posed nuisance and potential risk to the public on a regular basis and upon receiving reports of their presence near residential areas since November

2021; amended the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance twice in 2022 and 2024 to enhance the requirements of prohibition on feeding of wild pigs; alongside stepping up of publicity and education efforts. To combat feeding of wild pigs, the AFCD has arranged appropriate enforcement actions, including special operations conducted in the early morning and evening. As of December 31, 2024, the AFCD has issued FPNs to 12 individuals involved in illegal feeding of wild pigs.

The recent years have seen gradual improvement of the issue of wild pig nuisance in Hong Kong. According to the AFCD's statistics, the overall population of wild pigs decreased from about 1 830 in 2022 to about 900 in 2024; the number of wild pig nuisance black spots was 15 in 2024, reduced by about 64 per cent from 42 in 2022; the number of human injury cases caused by wild pigs was seven in 2024, decreased by about 80 per cent from 36 in 2022.

In respect of the nuisance and damages caused by the occurrence of wild pigs on farmlands and in rural areas, the Tai Lung Experimental Station of the AFCD regularly holds seminars to explain methods for preventing wild pigs on farmlands (such as building sturdy fences or electric fences, and using sound or light to drive them away), provide demonstration of facilities for reference, as well as offer on-site technical support to farmers. If reports of wild pig nuisance in rural farmlands are received, the AFCD will promptly deploy staff to investigate the situation on-site and provide advice on preventing wild pig nuisance to the affected persons or relevant management parties. Appropriate operations will also be arranged to capture wild pigs that cause nuisance or pose potential risk, if necessary. The AFCD will continue to strengthen its wild pig capture operations in rural areas. The AFCD does not maintain information on the economic loss arising from damage to farmlands caused by wild pigs.

The AFCD is conducting a comprehensive review of the current wild pig management strategies and relevant measures. The department has commissioned a wildlife management expert to assist in conducting an in-depth review and formulating an enhanced wild pig management action plan, which would also cover management strategies and measures to couple with nuisance caused by wild pigs in rural areas. In formulating the new wild pig management action plan, the department will make reference to the Mainland and overseas experiences and practices. The AFCD aims to complete the review in the first half of 2025.

On the other hand, to assist farmers in addressing the threat posed by wild pigs, eligible farmers can apply for a grant from the AFCD through the Farm Improvement Scheme under the Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund to purchase facilities for preventing wild pigs, thereby reducing the risk of damage to farmlands. The grant will be issued on a reimbursement basis, covering 90 per cent of the relevant costs (with a cap of HK\$50,000 or HK\$100,000, depending on the number of production units owned by the farmers). Farmers may also choose to apply for low-interest loans from the loan funds managed by the AFCD to purchase the relevant facilities.