

Monthly ovitrap index for Aedes albopictus of December 2019 remains at low level

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (January 16) announced that the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for December 2019 dropped to 0.1 per cent from 1.1 per cent in November last year, indicating that the infestation of *Aedes albopictus* in the areas surveyed was not extensive and the ovitrap index remained at a low level.

After months of enhanced collaborative efforts by various departments in mosquito prevention and control work, no area has recorded an Area Ovitrap Index (AOI) exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent since August last year. Moreover, the FEHD's year-end clean-up operation, during which mosquito preventive and control work has been enhanced, commenced on December 31 last year. The district offices of the FEHD have also targeted places which have drawn particular concern, such as old tenement buildings, rear lanes, village houses and construction sites, to intensify anti-mosquito work according to each district's circumstances.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "*Aedes albopictus* is a kind of mosquito that can transmit dengue fever (DF) as well as the Zika virus infection. DF is commonly found in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, and has become endemic in many countries in Southeast Asia. The World Health Organization also issued warnings that the number of DF cases recorded in Asia last year was higher than before. Since Hong Kong recorded one local DF case last year and the dengue activity in neighbouring areas has remained high, while the breeding and activity of mosquitoes also continue in the winter season, the community must stay vigilant and continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures. The FEHD and relevant government departments will continue their mosquito preventive and control work covering areas under their purview."

Among the 57 areas surveyed last month, positive ovitrap indices, ranging from 0.8 per cent to 2.1 per cent, were recorded in five areas. As for the port areas, the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for December fell to zero from 0.1 per cent in November.

The spokesman added that as *Aedes albopictus* breeds in small water bodies, members of the public should carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures, including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing the water in vases and scrubbing the inner surface as well as removing the water in saucers under potted plants at least once a week, properly disposing of containers such as soft drink cans and lunch boxes, and drilling large holes in unused tyres. He also advised public and estate management bodies to keep drains free of blockage and level all defective ground surfaces to prevent accumulation of water. They should also scrub all drains and surface sewers with an alkaline

detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

In addition, rural areas and the vicinity of shrubby areas are natural habitats for mosquitoes, other insects and animals. Members of the public living in rural areas may install mosquito screens on windows and doors if necessary. Those staying in the natural environment should take appropriate personal protective measures against mosquitoes, such as avoiding staying in the vicinity of shrubby areas for a long time, wearing light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers, and applying DEET-containing insect repellent. Members of the public are reminded to make reports to relevant government departments via 1823 if mosquito problems are detected.

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The spokesman reminded travellers to take the following precautionary measures when visiting areas where mosquito-borne diseases are prevalent during the Lunar New Year holidays:

- * Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved clothes and trousers;
- * Use insect repellents over exposed parts of the body when outdoors; and
- * Use mosquito screens or nets when a room is not air-conditioned.

Travellers returning from these places should seek medical advice if they have symptoms such as fever, severe headache or muscle and joint pain. They should also inform their doctor of their travel history.

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The ovitrap indices for *Aedes albopictus* in different areas and information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on the department website at www.fehd.gov.hk.