

Ombudsman probes effectiveness of mosquito prevention and control by Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Ms Winnie Chiu, today (August 20) announced the launch of a direct investigation to examine the effectiveness of mosquito prevention and control by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD).

Currently, the Pest Control Teams (PCTs) (Note) of the FEHD are responsible for mosquito prevention and control in public places, such as streets, slopes, villages and vacant government land throughout the territory. Their duties include setting up ovitraps to monitor the breeding of mosquitoes, clearing stagnant water and spraying pesticides to kill mosquitoes. The FEHD also provides technical support and training for other government departments, such as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Housing Department, to assist in their mosquito prevention and control work at venues and premises under their management.

There are public views that the FEHD's selected locations for setting up ovitraps have been far from comprehensive, thereby producing inaccurate survey results. Moreover, the time lag in the FEHD's release of ovitrap indices makes it difficult for the public to understand the latest situation. There are also media reports on relatively high ovitrap indices recorded for some districts in certain months, which translate to serious mosquito infestations. The FEHD's management effectiveness over the PCTs is also subject to queries.

Ms Chiu noted, "Mosquito prevention and control has been a matter of public concern. The humid and rainy weather during spring and summer in Hong Kong provides an ideal breeding environment for mosquitoes. Mosquito infestations can cause a nuisance to the daily life of the general public as well as spread serious diseases such as Dengue fever and Japanese encephalitis, among others. According to information from the Centre for Health Protection, the number of Dengue fever cases in Hong Kong has been rising, from 124 cases in 2016 to 198 cases in 2019. Such a rising trend should not be taken lightly. The FEHD's mosquito prevention and control work is, therefore, of paramount importance. We are initiating this direct investigation to examine how the FEHD handles the problem of mosquito infestations, which includes the Department's management of the PCTs, its assessment of mosquito infestations and the preventive and control measures taken in order to analyse its work effectiveness and make recommendations for improvement where necessary."

The Ombudsman now invites members of the public to provide information and views on this topic. Written submissions should reach the Office of The Ombudsman by September 20, 2020:

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Note: As at January 2020, there were 2 721 members in the FEHD's PCTs, with 729 team members from the Department and 1 992 from its contractors.

