

Pest Control Steering Committee reviews preventive work on import of bedbug infestation by departments (with photo)

The interdepartmental Pest Control Steering Committee (PCSC) of the Government held its 16th meeting today (November 17) to discuss response measures on preventing the import of bedbug infestation, the mosquito control work plan for the coming year, as well as the follow-up work on the first imported case of Zika virus infection this year.

Preventing import of bedbug infestation

During the meeting, the Under Secretary for Environment and Ecology, and the Chairperson of the PCSC, Miss Diane Wong, expressed the concern of the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing, regarding the problem of the overseas bedbug infestation, as well as his policy steer on strengthening the prevention of the imported infestation and interdepartmental co-ordination on bedbug prevention, and instructing department officers to conduct on-site inspections at the airport and boundary control points (BCPs), etc for ensuring the effective implementation of the relevant work. Representatives of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Department of Health (DH) reported to the PCSC on their work progress in preventing the import of bedbug infestation. The PCSC noted that the FEHD and the Port Health Division of the Centre for Health Protection of the DH, together with the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) and relevant organisations, have stepped up publicity and education work on various fronts, including conducting on-site inspections at the airport and the cruise terminal to strengthen prevention, distributing promotional leaflets at the airport and reminding citizens to stay vigilant when traveling abroad, etc.

The Government earlier met with stakeholders (such as the AAHK, the MTR Corporation Limited, the hotel sector, the Tourism Commission, and the pest control sector) on preventing the import of bedbug infestation. In addition to providing technical advice, relevant departments have also distributed information and leaflets on preventing the import of bedbug infestation to stakeholders, including those from the hotel and tourism sector, public transport and transport sector. All departments agreed at the meeting that it is necessary to maintain close contact with the frontline sectors and the public, to continuously enhance information dissemination channels and to conduct risk assessments based on the actual situation of the related sectors. These will enable the sectors and the public to better understand the methods for preventing the transmission of bedbug infestation. For example, the District Services and Community Care Teams will assist the FEHD to disseminate practical information on maintaining home and environmental

hygiene and preventing and controlling bedbugs to residents of subdivided units and "three-nil" buildings. The FEHD also shared key points of technical guidelines and relevant applications with the meeting participants, including spraying insecticides on large discarded furniture items by refuse collection points staff daily, and encouraging departments with refuse collection facilities to adopt the same practice.

The Government will closely monitor the development of the situation, continue to provide technical support to frontline organisations and sectors and co-ordinate efforts from all sectors to prevent the import of bedbug infestation into Hong Kong.

Mosquito control

The representatives of the FEHD reported to the PCSC that the situation of mosquito proliferation this year continues to be under control, the overall trend of the Gravidtrap Index for *Aedes albopictus* this year is similar to that of last year, while no cases of local dengue fever or other mosquito-borne diseases have been recorded in Hong Kong this year. Nevertheless, departments will pay special attention to the surrounding environment under their purviews that is usually prone to mosquito breeding. Besides remaining vigilant in winter, departments will proactively strengthen their mosquito preventive and control measures at places under their management before the arrival of rainy season next year, including carrying out regular inspections of the surrounding environment, eliminating potential mosquito breeding places, removing stagnant water, applying larvicides at appropriate locations, placing mosquito trapping devices and applying robotics foggers, etc. Looking ahead, departments will receive timely notices from the FEHD to start conducting fogging operations at the same time until the end of the rainy season. The departments will closely monitor the situation of mosquito infestation as reflected by the surveillance indices, and constantly update the list of mosquito infestation hotspots, so as to adjust and plan their work based on the actual situation.

As international travel has become increasingly frequent following the return to normalcy, the Government has implemented measures to strengthen the prevention of import of mosquito-borne diseases from overseas (including dengue fever and Zika virus infection). The Port Health Division of the DH has strengthened inspections at BCPs to ensure that good environmental hygiene is maintained and proper mosquito control measures are in place. Health promotion at BCPs has been enhanced through pamphlet distribution and poster displays to remind travellers of the preventive measures against mosquito-borne diseases. In the light of the first imported case of Zika virus infection recently, members of the public are reminded to stay vigilant, pay close attention to the hygiene of affected areas and observe the Government's health advice and special announcements during travel.

Participants of the meeting came from three policy bureaux and 21 government departments and organisations, which set the direction of the pest control work for the Government.

