

Pest Control Steering Committee reviews progress of anti-mosquito and anti-rodent work implemented by departments (with photo)

The interdepartmental Pest Control Steering Committee (PCSC) held its 18th meeting today (June 3) to review the latest situation of mosquito infestation and the anti-mosquito work taken by departments. Furthermore, the PCSC also examined the work progress of departments under the Cross-sectoral Territory-wide Anti-rodent Action (the Action) and planned their anti-rodent work for the future.

Mosquito control

In view of a local Dengue Fever (DF) case recently, the representatives of the Department Health (DH) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) reported the follow-up work to the PCSC.

The Centre for Health Protection of the DH had immediately conducted epidemiological investigations and questionnaire surveys with neighbouring residents, as well as provided free DF antibody tests for people in the district with relevant symptoms. The FEHD had also immediately conducted mosquito infestation surveys and carried out additional targeted mosquito prevention and control work in areas within a 250-metre radius of the residence and workplace of the patient, as well as places he had visited during the incubation and infectious period. The FEHD also stepped up inspections and took enforcement actions where necessary. To date, no other local infection cases have been found, and no DF virus has been detected in the collected mosquitoes.

Based on the latest surveillance data, the representative of DH reported that there has been an increase in DF cases in some places in Asia thus far, compared with the corresponding period of last year. The Americas (including Brazil, Argentina and Peru) have even recorded over 8 million cases, which is a record number, since the beginning of 2024.

After the World Health Organization's announcement in May 2023 that the COVID-19 epidemic situation no longer constitutes a "public health emergency of international concern", the inbound and outbound passenger traffic has become busy. Local mosquitoes may carry the virus and spread it to local residents as they bite imported DF patients, resulting in local infections and an increased risk of further local transmission. Furthermore, patients who have a second infection with a different type of DF virus are more likely to result in a serious complication, i.e. dengue hemorrhagic fever, which can lead to death. Therefore, members of the public should stay alert.

The representative of the FEHD reported to the PCSC the situation of mosquito infestation this year thus far. Similar to previous years, the Gravidtrap Indices started to rise since the rainy season commenced in April. As rainfall in April this year had more than doubled compared with the corresponding period last year, the FEHD immediately stepped up mosquito prevention and control work, including eliminating mosquito breeding places, applying larvicides, conducting fogging operations to eradicate adult mosquitoes, and placing mosquito trapping devices at suitable locations. The FEHD has also conducted on-site inspections with relevant departments, and provided them with professional advice and technical support.

The increasingly hot and rainy weather in Hong Kong in recent years has provided favourable conditions for mosquito breeding, while busier inbound and outbound passenger traffic may lead to an increasing risk of local transmission of DF. As such, the Under Secretary for Environment and Ecology, and the Chairperson of the PCSC, Miss Diane Wong, specifically reminded all departments not to let their guard down in the coming months, and that they should continually strengthen mosquito prevention and control work, such as conducting inspections of their venues and the surrounding environment, removing stagnant water, and adopting appropriate mosquito control devices, etc. All departments should also step up the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations to reduce the risk.

Rodent control

Under the Action, the FEHD will continue to implement a series of targeted rodent prevention and control measures, including continuing overnight anti-rodent operations and the application of new anti-rodent technologies and tools. The FEHD will also continue to conduct anti-rodent operations targeting 97 priority rodent black spots with a view to achieving the key performance indicator of reducing the number of black spots by 60 per cent by end 2024 as set out in the 2023 Policy Address. District Environmental Hygiene Offices of the FEHD will also extend the scheme of allowing food premises to place large-sized refuse bins at rear lanes to more appropriate locations, and encourage relevant food premises to participate.

Furthermore, from this year, the FEHD has fully adopted thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence technology to conduct the Rodent Activity Survey (RAS) in each district for formulation of the Rodent Absence Rate. The FEHD will plan rodent prevention and control work, and deploy more effective anti-rodent actions in blackspots accordingly. Surveillance points with thermal imaging cameras installed cover various locations, including rear lanes, planter areas and other places where rodents may be present. In addition to adjusting the surveillance points based on investigation results, the FEHD is also co-ordinating with relevant departments to extend the RAS to venues managed by other departments (including the Housing Department and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department) next year to make the investigations more representative.

Representatives of relevant departments also reported their work taken under the Action. Apart from continuing to implement the Anti-rodent Action

in Estates in the Hong Kong Housing Authority's public rental housing estates (PRHEs), the HD has reported the latest progress of rodent control in PRHEs, including strengthening daily cleaning and anti-rodent work, installing mobile surveillance systems in locations with serious rodent infestations to detect rodent activities, as well as adopting other new anti-rodent devices, etc. District Offices have incorporated anti-rodent services into the service contracts for providing cleaning services to the common areas of "three-nil" buildings on a need basis. The FEHD will continue to provide training and technical support on pest control to other departments responsible for managing public venues, aiming to strengthen their supervision of contracted service providers and enhance the level of pest control services.

All departments agreed to continue to strengthen rodent prevention and control measures in premises under their respective management, to strengthen internal monitoring and assessment of the outcome of rodent control work, and to actively encourage relevant sectors and stakeholders to co-operate with the Government's work, eliminating rodents' fundamental survival conditions of food, harbourage and passages from their respective areas. Furthermore, the Environment and Ecology Bureau and the FEHD are proactively following up on the second-stage amendment work of environmental hygiene-related legislation with a view to more effectively handle rodent infestation and other environmental hygiene issues.

The meeting was chaired by Miss Wong. Participants of the meeting came from three policy bureaux and 20 government departments and organisations.

