

Public urged to keep up anti-mosquito efforts

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) announced today (March 13) that the monthly territory-wide ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* decreased from 0.2 per cent in January to 0.1 per cent in February, indicating that the infestation of *Aedes albopictus* in the areas surveyed was not extensive and the ovitrap index still remained at a low level. Nevertheless, the FEHD reminded the public to carry out early effective measures against mosquitoes as the warm and humid weather of spring is favourable for mosquito breeding.

"*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 weather will turn even warmer and more humid in spring which will be conducive to large-scale mosquito breeding in a short period of time, the community must stay vigilant and continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures," an FEHD spokesman said.

Among the 57 areas surveyed last month, positive ovitrap indices, ranging from 0.9 per cent to 1 per cent, were recorded in four areas. As for the port areas, the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for February remained at zero.

"The FEHD and relevant government departments will continue to intensify their mosquito prevention and control work covering areas under their purview and strengthen publicity and education campaigns. The FEHD is conducting a three-phase Anti-mosquito Campaign this year. The first phase of the territory-wide campaign, lasting for four weeks, started on February 24 and will end on March 20. During the period, mosquito prevention and control work has been enhanced by the FEHD and relevant government departments. The district offices of the FEHD have targeted areas which have drawn particular concern, such as locations in close proximity to human residences, schools, construction sites, public housing estates, hospitals, illegal cultivation sites, waterfront public and private cargo working areas, cross boundary check points, typhoon shelters and cross boundary ferry terminals to remove accumulation of water and to carry out mosquito prevention and control work. The second phase of the Anti-mosquito Campaign will start on April 20 and end on June 19. The FEHD will, after the first and second phases of the campaign, conduct territory-wide thematic mosquito prevention and control special operations so as to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign," the spokesman said.

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.

The spokesman reiterated that effective mosquito control requires the sustained effort of all parties concerned. The community must work together with the Government to carry out effective mosquito control measures.

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.