

Special meeting of Pest Control Steering Committee convened to enhance interdepartmental collaboration in preventing spread of dengue fever and rat Hepatitis E virus (with photo)

The interdepartmental Pest Control Steering Committee (PCSC) convened a special meeting today (October 9) to discuss the response measures for preventing the local transmission of dengue fever (DF) through imported cases, the work plan for mosquito control in the coming year, as well as follow-up actions in response to the recent human infection of rat Hepatitis E virus (HEV).

Preventing the spread of DF

In the meeting, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health explained to the attendees the details of the latest imported DF cases and the CHP's risk assessment. As of October 3, the CHP has recorded a total of 77 DF cases this year, including 73 imported cases (12 from the Mainland) and four local cases. The number of imported DF cases this year has surpassed the 62 cases recorded last year, with 13 cases recorded within the two-week period from September 20 to October 3. The patients had traveled to Guangdong Province (Foshan (nine cases) and Shenzhen (one case)), India (two cases), and Nepal (one case) during the incubation periods. According to the Guangdong Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Guangdong Province recorded over 3 000 local DF cases in September, 1 764 local DF cases within the past week from September 30 to October 6, with the highest numbers of cases reported in Foshan, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Jiangmen and Zhongshan. The continued occurrence of DF cases outside Hong Kong, coupled with the frequent travel by residents to and from Guangdong, Hong Kong and other areas, resulted in an increased risk of importing DF cases into Hong Kong, posing a risk of local transmission.

While the local gravidtrap index has shown a downward trend with the passing of the rainy season, in view of the DF situation in other areas, the Government not only instructed various bureaux and departments, as well as trade stakeholders, to strengthen territory-wide mosquito prevention and control work to prevent the local spread of DF in early October, but also discussed response measures with the bureaux and departments in today's meeting.

Mosquito control

The representative from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) reported to the PCSC that the mosquito infestation this year continues to be under control, and the overall trend of the gravidtrap index for Aedes

albopictus this year is similar to that of last year. The FEHD has also conducted site inspections with relevant departments, and provided them with professional advice and technical support to assist them in formulating and implementing effective anti-mosquito measures swiftly, as well as strengthening publicity and education in parallel. The departments will pay special attention to environments prone to mosquito breeding under their purviews, and proactively strengthen their mosquito preventive and control measures at places under their management, including carrying out regular inspections of the surrounding environment, eliminating potential mosquito breeding places, removing stagnant water, applying larvicides at appropriate locations, aptly placing more mosquito trapping devices and applying ultra-low volume foggers, etc. Looking ahead, the FEHD will continue to work closely with other departments and proactively take mosquito control actions, including eliminating potential mosquito breeding places, as well as the timely conducting of fogging operations in a concerted manner 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 to adjust and plan their work based on the actual situation to ensure rapid and effective mosquito prevention and control efforts.

Investigation of human infection of HEV

Regarding the recent case of human infection of HEV, the CHP's epidemiological investigations revealed that the patient resides in Hung Hom. She claimed that she did not have direct contact with rodents or rats, and had no travel history during the incubation period, indicating that this is a locally acquired infection.

The CHP and the FEHD reported to the PCSC that in response to the above-mentioned HEV case, the FEHD has carried out follow-up work over the past two weeks, including visiting the patient's residence and surrounding areas to conduct rodent infestation investigations, providing advice on rodent control measures to property management personnel; as well as inspecting the patient's residence, the places she visited before onset of the disease and the surrounding public areas, and stepping up street washing, rodent prevention and control work.

In the meeting, the FEHD reminded all bureaux and departments to diligently implement various rodent prevention and control measures in areas under their purview. Anti-rodent work requires co-operation from all sectors. The PCSC appealed to members of the public and all sectors to strengthen rodent prevention and control measures in their respective areas and tie in with the rodent prevention and control work of the Government to reduce the risk of HEV transmission.

The Environment and Ecology Bureau will also meet with the trade later to gather the collective efforts of different sectors, promoting cross-sector, multidisciplinary and public participation in preventing the spread of DF and HEV.

The meeting today was chaired by the Under Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Miss Diane Wong. Government bureaux, departments and organisations attending the meeting were the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department; the Architectural Services Department; the Buildings Department; the Civil Engineering and Development Department; the Development Bureau; the Department of Health; the Drainage Services Department; the Education Bureau; the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department; the Environmental Protection Department; the FEHD; the Government Property Agency; the Hospital Authority; the Home Affairs Department; the Housing Department; the Highways Department; the Information Services Department; the Lands Department; the Leisure and Cultural Services Department; the Marine Department; the Social Welfare Department; and the Water Supplies Department.

