

SSSH steps up anti-epidemic measures in light of epidemic development

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (July 30) that in view of the recent COVID-19 cases related to the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (SSSH), the FEHD has further stepped up anti-epidemic measures of the slaughterhouse. In addition to arranging all SSSH stakeholders, including the operator, importers, buyers and transportation companies, for testing of COVID-19, only staff with negative testing results could enter the slaughter lines for work starting from tonight.

The testing agency has completed the testing work for 1 214 deep throat saliva samples from SSSH stakeholders so far. Out of them, three persons were preliminarily tested positive. The FEHD and the agency will follow up some cases that remain and complete the virus tests as soon as possible, so as to have the infected persons isolated immediately.

The three new cases involve a buyer and two persons working in transportation companies. The SSSH immediately conducted thorough cleaning and disinfection at places where the persons concerned had stayed or commuted. It has also reminded all workers that if they feel unwell, they should seek medical advice as soon as possible and should not go to work.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has already contacted the new cases involving the three persons for investigation and has traced their close contacts in the slaughterhouse. Arrangements will be made for them to be tested or isolated if necessary. The CHP has also notified SSSH today that the two earlier preliminary positive cases have been changed to confirmed cases. In addition to the five confirmed cases announced by the CHP previously, there are so far a cumulative total of ten cases related to the SSSH, i.e. three preliminarily tested positive cases and seven confirmed cases.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "The Government is very concerned about the cases in relation to SSSH, and will strive to ensure the smooth operation of the slaughterhouse and that the supply of live pigs will not be affected. The Government and SSSH will closely monitor the latest development and further step up the anti-epidemic measures in light of the on-the-ground situation."

The spokesman said that the operation of the SSSH has remained normal, and it has strived to ensure that its operation meets the required hygienic and environmental standards, and that all meat supplied to the market is fit for human consumption. During the epidemic, the SSSH has required all workers to observe the personal protective equipment guidelines, and implemented the following anti-epidemic measures:

(1) Install two infrared body temperature monitors at the entrance to ensure that only people with normal body temperature are allowed to enter the

slaughterhouse;

(2) Require all people to wear a mask when they are in the slaughterhouse;

(3) Require all people to maintain social distancing and avoid gathering;

(4) Provide alcohol-based handrub and remind all people to keep their hands clean; and

(5) Remind all those working in the slaughterhouse to observe personal hygiene, and that if they feel unwell, they should seek medical advice as soon as possible and should not go to work.

The spokesman stressed that members of the public need not be worried about the food safety of meat slaughtered at the slaughterhouse. According to the current scientific information and advice of the World Health Organization (WHO), it is unlikely that humans will be infected with COVID-19 via food. Members of the public are unlikely to be infected via fresh meat slaughtered at the slaughterhouse.

Nevertheless, the Centre for Food Safety, based on the WHO advice on food safety, reminds the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times, including washing hands before and after handling raw and cooked foods; separating raw meat and internal organs from cooked foods; cooking food thoroughly, avoiding to eat raw or undercooked animals, etc. so as to ensure food safety.