

Import of poultry meat and products from areas in Korea suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (December 19) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in areas in Korea, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the relevant areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

The relevant areas are as follows:

(1) Sejong-si

Jeollabuk-do Province

(2) Buan-gun

(3) Gimje-si

Gyeongsangbuk-do Province

(4) Yeongcheon-si

Jeollanam-do Province

(5) Gangjin-gun

(6) Yeongam-gun

Chungcheongnam-do Province

(7) Seosan-si

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 20 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 15.52 million poultry eggs from Korea in the first nine months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the Korean authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

TD enhances vehicle licence to provide convenience to public and enhances

vehicle registration and licensing regime

The Transport Department (TD) today (December 19) said that, following the passage of relevant legislation by the Legislative Council (LegCo), starting from December 30, it will enhance the vehicle licence (VL) and simplify application documents. In addition, it will enhance the vehicle registration and licensing regime to address the problem of improperly abandoned vehicles by strengthening control and monitoring at the source.

(1) Enhanced vehicle licence simplifying application documents starting from December 30

The Road Traffic (Registration and Licensing of Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulation 2024 and the Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third Party Risks) (Amendment) Regulation 2024 have been passed by the LegCo and will come into effect on December 30, 2024, for the TD to introduce the enhanced VL and simplify application documents for the greater convenience of the public.

Starting from December 30, 2024, the TD will issue a notice showing the latest validity period of the VL to vehicle owners who have successfully renewed their VL, followed by a VL without the expiry date printed on it. After obtaining such a VL, if the vehicle particulars (e.g. registration mark, body colour, etc) remain unchanged, the vehicle owner can continue to use the same VL after each subsequent renewal, and there will be no need to replace the VL displayed on the windscreen of the vehicle. Before the VL expires, the TD will issue VL renewal reminders to vehicle owners through the electronic contact means they provided.

Upon the enhancement of the VL, vehicle owners may scan the new QR code printed at the top of the VL and access the TD's Vehicle Licence Online Enquiry Platform for instant checking of its expiry date without pre-registration.

In parallel, the TD will simplify the application documents required for VL applications, so that vehicle owners can complete VL renewals more quickly and conveniently. By that time, when applying for licence renewal, vehicle owners will no longer be required to present the Vehicle Registration Document or the Certificate of Roadworthiness after passing vehicle examination. When [submitting a VL application online](#), once the third party risks insurance record is verified via the backend support of the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers, there will be no need for vehicle owners to upload their policy of insurance.

(2) Enhanced vehicle registration and licensing regime and proper disposal of vehicles

In addition, the Road Traffic (Registration and Licensing of Vehicles) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulation 2024 has been passed by the LegCo, aiming at

enhancing the vehicle registration and licensing regime to heighten deterrence against improper abandoning of unwanted vehicles with strengthened control at the source. The new legislation requires vehicle owners, within three months after receiving a notice sent by the TD, to renew the licence of their vehicles that have been unlicensed for two years, or cancel the registration of the vehicles with the TD after scrapping the vehicle or permanently shipping it from Hong Kong. Failing to do so will constitute an offence. The unlicensed vehicles will continue to be registered under the name of the owners concerned.

If individual vehicle owners have a genuine difficulty in taking the required actions or have reasonable grounds for not licensing their vehicles, they may apply for an exemption with the TD. The new legislation is planned to take effect in December 2025. The TD will announce the commencement date of the new legislation by a gazette notice in due course and promulgate the application guidelines for exemption before the new legislation becomes effective.

A spokesman for the TD said, "Following the passage of the above legislation, from today onwards, the TD has ceased cancelling the registration of vehicles unlicensed for over two years. Registered vehicle owners must cancel their unwanted vehicles' registration with the TD after scrapping or having the vehicles permanently despatched out of Hong Kong. Before the registration of a vehicle is cancelled, the vehicle concerned will continue to be registered under the name of the owner, who has to bear all the legal liabilities associated with that vehicle. We encourage registered vehicle owners to make use of the [e-Licensing Portal](#) for checking the VL expiry date, handling licensing matters, and taking proper action on their vehicles unlicensed for two years in accordance with the requirements of the new legislation."

Members of the public may refer to the TD's website for details of the [enhanced VL and simplified application document measures](#), and how to properly dispose of vehicles after the [enhancement of the vehicle registration and licensing regime](#), or call the hotline at 2804 2600.

[Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan](#)

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and

supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on December 18 to noon today (December 19), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 152 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan" (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 106 295 samples of food imported from Japan (including 68 901 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 24 066 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Composite Interest Rate: End of November 2024

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (December 19) the composite interest rate at the end of November 2024 (Note 1).

The composite interest rate, which is a measure of the average cost of funds of banks, decreased by 10 basis points to 2.20 per cent at the end of November 2024, from 2.30 per cent at the end of October 2024 (see Chart 1 in the Annex). The decrease in composite interest rate mainly reflected the decrease in the weighted funding cost for deposits during the month (see Chart 2 in the Annex) (Note 2).

The historical data of the composite interest rate from the end of the fourth quarter of 2003 to the end of November 2024 are available in the Monthly Statistical Bulletin on the HKMA website (www.hkma.gov.hk).

Note 1: The composite interest rate is a weighted average interest rate of all Hong Kong dollar interest-rate-sensitive liabilities, which include deposits from customers, amounts due to banks, negotiable certificates of deposit and other debt instruments, and all other liabilities that do not involve any formal payment of interest but the values of which are sensitive to interest rate movements (such as Hong Kong dollar non-interest bearing demand deposits) on the books of banks. Data from retail banks, which account for about 90 per cent of the total customers' deposits in the banking sector, are used in the calculation. It should be noted that the composite interest rate represents only average interest expenses. There are various other costs involved in the making of a loan, such as operating costs (e.g. staff and rental expenses), credit cost and hedging cost, which are not covered by the composite interest rate.

Note 2: Since June 2019, the composite interest rate and weighted deposit rate have been calculated based on the new local "Interest rate risk in the banking book" (IRRBB) framework. As such, these figures are not strictly comparable with those of previous months.

[Elderly reminded to take precautionary measures during cold spell](#)

Attention Duty Announcers, Radio and TV Stations:

Please broadcast the following special announcement immediately, and repeat it at frequent intervals:

With the approach of cold weather, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) reminds the elderly to take precautionary measures during the cold spell. Relatives, friends and neighbours are encouraged to show concern and care for the health of frail elderly persons, particularly those living alone. Those in need may call the SWD hotline at 2343 2255 for assistance.

