

LCQ16: Prevention and control of bedbug infestation

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (November 29):

Question:

It has been reported that in recent months, bedbug infestations have spread from European countries such as France and the United Kingdom to South Korea where bedbugs can be found in public places such as hotels, cinemas and gosiwons. On the other hand, with the post-epidemic boom of "revenge travel" around the world, some pest control experts opine that bedbugs might be imported to Hong Kong in large numbers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has assessed the risks and consequences of a bedbug outbreak in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will set up a mechanism to monitor and make public the distribution and spread of bedbug infestations in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it will improve the dedicated thematic webpage on "Bed Bugs" in the website of the Centre for Health Protection under the Department of Health, including the provision of additional contents such as the Government's preparatory work and contingency plans, recommended bedbug control products for purchase, a list of vendors selling bedbug control products, and a list of countries/regions affected by bedbug infestations, as well as set up a hotline providing the relevant information; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) of the types and stocks of bedbug control equipment and insecticides currently used by the Government, and whether it will procure additional bedbug control equipment and insecticides; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) whether it has plans to set up bedbug control squads in the event of a bedbug outbreak to help the underprivileged groups deal with bedbug infestations in their flats, as well as to distribute bedbug control products (in particular bedbug spray) to members of the public in need; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) whether it will issue to all schools, hospitals, public housing estates, venues managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, cinemas, public transport operators, among others, in Hong Kong, guidelines on bedbug prevention and control as well as disinfection and cleansing, including

requesting the MTR Corporation Limited to carry out regular disinfection with steam cleaners at MTR stations and the West Kowloon Station of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, and requesting the Airport Authority Hong Kong to carry out disinfection in the same manner at the airport during bedbug outbreaks; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Bedbugs are common in tropical and subtropical areas, but less common in cold areas. There is speculation that climate change might have led to sudden proliferation of bedbugs in cold areas, hence causing local attention. Bedbugs are not uncommon in Hong Kong, and the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has pointed out that there is no evidence that bedbugs can transmit diseases. Nevertheless, considering that bedbug infestation from other places may be brought into Hong Kong through passengers and transportation (such as aircraft and cruise ships, etc.), the Government attaches great importance to the problem, and has taken prompt actions to strengthen the prevention of bedbug transmission.

In consultation with the CHP of the DH, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and the Housing Department (HD), my reply to the question raised by the Hon Yang Wing-kit is as follows:

(1) Relevant departments of the Government have maintained close communication with the frontline sectors (including the Airport Authority, the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), cruise terminals, the hotel sector, the public transport sector and the pest control sector, etc.) and have conducted risk assessments on the possibility of local outbreaks arising from the import of bedbug infestation. According to the relevant sectors, there have been no noticeable indications of imported bedbug infestation. They are confident that the problem could be managed and have taken proactive measures, including performing sustained deep cleansing and disinfestation work as well as strengthened anti-bedbug work, on premises and in transportation under their purview to safeguard the first line of defence.

The Government will continue to monitor the development of the situation. It will also strengthen its communication with relevant sectors, continue to provide technical and information support as well as step up publicity and education work, with a view to preventing the import of bedbug infestation with all sectors concerted.

(2) Bedbugs typically inhabit near places where human sleep, for example under mattresses and carpets, behind the walls, and inside the cracks of furniture. Public places in general are not their harbourages or habitats. Therefore, it is relatively difficult to set up a monitoring system for bedbug infestation in public places. Bedbugs are not a vector, and the World Health Organization (WHO) has not provided any advice or guidelines on their surveillance.

The Government will continue to maintain close communication with the relevant sectors in order to grasp and assess the situation of the import of bedbug infestation on premises and in transportation under their purview. Moreover, the Pest Control Steering Committee (the Committee), which comprises members from three policy bureaux and 21 government departments and organisations, has established a notification system in relation to bedbug infestation. Under the notification system, if there is a bedbug infestation outbreak on a department's premises, the department concerned needs to notify the Committee. The Committee will discuss the direction of anti-bedbug work and follow-up measures, and report the progress of the relevant work to the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration. The Committee will also make public its work where necessary.

(3) Regarding the dissemination of information, a thematic webpage on bedbugs has been set up on the website of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). The webpage gives detailed information on the biological properties of bedbugs (including that bedbugs may cause skin irritation as a result of their biting, and that they are not important media in transmitting diseases), and provides effective ways of bedbug prevention and control for public reference. In addition, factors to be considered in selecting a pest control company have been uploaded onto the FEHD's website to facilitate the public in purchasing suitable services to tackle bedbug infestation on private premises. For enquiries on tackling bedbugs, the public may contact the FEHD at 2868 0000. At present, the WHO has not drawn up a list of the countries/regions affected by bedbug infestation.

Moreover, the CHP of the DH will update the health information on its thematic webpage on bedbugs as appropriate.

(4) Currently, if the FEHD finds any discarded furniture items in its public refuse collection points infested with bedbugs, it will spray a synthetic-pyrethroid pesticide with residual effect on such items, so as to prevent the spread of bedbugs to nearby areas. As the FEHD has a sufficient stock of the pesticide and there is abundant supply in the market, it has no plan for additional procurement at the moment.

(5) Regarding the bedbug infestation problem among the underprivileged, the FEHD will contact the HAD and seek assistance from the District Services and Community Care Teams in disseminating practical information on maintaining home and environmental hygiene and preventing and eliminating bedbugs to residents of subdivided units and "three-nil" buildings. For tenants living in public housing estates who are unable to deal with bedbugs by themselves, staff of the estate offices under the HD will, depending on the situations, provide them with assistance or refer the cases to social welfare organisations for follow-up.

The FEHD will continue to provide technical advice on the prevention and control of bedbugs for social welfare organisations and volunteer groups that assist underprivileged families in dealing with the bedbug problem. It will also assist the relevant groups by clearing the discarded articles during their anti-bedbug operations.

(6) The Government will continue to strengthen the publicity and education work on preventing the import of bedbug infestation. Besides on-site inspections at the airport and cruise terminals as well as distribution of promotional leaflets by the FEHD and the DH earlier on, the relevant government departments have disseminated guidelines and leaflets on bedbug prevention and control to the hotel and tourism sector and the public transport sector (including the Airport Authority, the MTRCL as well as land and sea transport operators), etc., with a view to reducing the risks of importing bedbugs at source and enabling the sectors to grasp the effective ways for prevention and elimination of bedbugs. Upon receipt of reports of suspected bedbug detection, the MTRCL will conduct thorough inspections on the trains and carry out deep cleansing with steam.

In addition, the Committee has disseminated the relevant guidelines and leaflets to its members and other stakeholders, so as to enhance the knowledge of the contractors of the departments' premises and the general public on the ways to prevent the import of bedbug infestation and to handle bedbugs.

Tenders invited for licence of fee-paying public car park

The Government Property Agency is inviting tenders for a three-year licence of a fee-paying public car park on portions of the Ground Floor and the First Floor of North District Government Offices, 3 Pik Fung Road, Fanling, New Territories, Hong Kong.

The premises should be used for the purpose of a fee-paying public car park for the parking of private cars and light goods vehicles only.

The tender notice was uploaded today (November 29) to the Agency's Property Portal: www.gpaproperty.gov.hk. Tender documents are available for collection at the Government Property Agency, 9/F, South Tower, West Kowloon Government Offices, 11 Hoi Ting Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, during the period from 9am to 6pm from Monday to Friday, except public holidays. The documents can also be downloaded from the Agency's website.

Interested tenderers who wish to attend a site inspection should make a prior appointment with the Government Property Agency by calling 3842 6783 on or before December 7.

Tenderers must submit their tenders by placing them in the Government Logistics Department Tender Box situated on the Ground Floor, North Point Government Offices, 333 Java Road, North Point, Hong Kong, before noon on December 20. Late tenders will not be accepted.

LCQ22: CHOICE Magazine published by Consumer Council

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (November 29):

Question:

It is learnt that the CHOICE Magazine published by the Consumer Council (CC) (the monthly magazine) protects the rights and interests of consumers through product testing and market research, a complaint repository and product quality monitoring. The print version and the online version of the monthly magazine are both sold at \$12 per copy and per issue. Individual articles of the online version are available on subscription at \$8 per article, and online articles published for five or more years are all made available free of charge for reading by consumers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council if it knows:

(1) the sales of the monthly magazine (with a breakdown by a single issue of the print version as well as a single issue and a single article of the online version) and the number of downloads of the online free articles in each of the past three years; and

(2) the measures put in place by the CC to strengthen the promotion of the monthly magazine, including whether it will consider making the online version of the monthly magazine available for free download, so as to enable more people to know about the work of the CC, thereby promoting the protection of consumers' rights and interests; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Consumer Council (Council) has been publishing the CHOICE Magazine since 1976. Each issue of the monthly magazine features a wide range of topics, including product tests as well as surveys, studies and complaint cases on products and services, providing consumers with comprehensive information.

At present, the CHOICE Magazine offers print and online versions, both at \$12 per issue. Consumers may also purchase individual articles online at \$8 per article. In each issue of the online version of the CHOICE Magazine, some articles are available to consumers for free. Articles that have been published for five years or more are all free of charge for consumers'

reading. In addition, consumers may also subscribe the print or online version of the CHOICE Magazine on annual terms at a discounted price.

Regarding the two parts of the question, my reply is as follows:

(1) The sales of the CHOICE Magazine and the online page views of its articles in the past three years are set out in the table below on a yearly basis:

	2020	2021	2022
Sales of the print version			
– Single issues	114 772 copies	109 183 copies	101 658 copies
– Annual subscriptions	112 381 copies	99 268 copies	93 688 copies
Sales of the online version			
– Single issues	6 802 copies	4 806 copies	4 883 copies
– Annual subscriptions	45 673 copies	47 803 copies	45 709 copies
– Individual articles	11 531 pieces	10 403 pieces	11 615 pieces
Online page views of the articles (Note 1)	839 740 page views	2 757 749 (Note 2) page views	2 648 801 page views

(2) The Council has all along been promoting the CHOICE Magazine through a multi-pronged approach, so as to disseminate useful consumption information to consumers.

The Council holds a press conference on the CHOICE Magazine every month to fully publicise the test results in the monthly magazine. Infographics and multimedia resources are also provided to facilitate the media to grasp and report the content. This enables consumers to receive information on the test results of the monthly magazine through the reports of the media and enhances their understanding of the monthly magazine.

Furthermore, the Council sets up a booth at the Hong Kong Book Fair every year to promote the CHOICE Magazine and to attract new subscribers. At the same time, the Council strengthens the interaction with consumers through publishing the content of the monthly magazine on its website and social media channels (Facebook, YouTube and WeChat) as well as running prize quizzes. In recent years, the Council has published more free-of-charge articles of the CHOICE Magazine on its website, and has set up a column named "Shopping Guide", which consolidates the information from previous issues of the monthly magazine in a reader-friendly way to provide timely references for consumers.

The measures abovementioned are conducive to raising consumers'

awareness of the content of the CHOICE Magazine and enlarging its readership continuously. Meanwhile, they also allow more consumers to learn about the work of the Council, facilitating the protection of consumers' rights and interests.

Along with the rapid development of technologies, the reading habits of consumers and the way they receive information have been evolving. The Council is considering the views of different stakeholders to review its marketing strategy, with a view to enabling the public to obtain consumption information with greater convenience.

Note 1: The Council does not collate the page view statistics on charged or free-of-charge articles respectively.

Note 2: The Council launched a new website in August 2021, integrating the original website of the Council with the website of the CHOICE Magazine and revamping the mode of reading the CHOICE Magazine online, hence the relevant page views had increased.

[Speech by SITI at Cyberport 20th Anniversary Celebration cum Cyberport Entrepreneurship Programmes Graduation Ceremony 2023 \(English only\) \(with photo\)](#)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, at the Cyberport 20th Anniversary Celebration cum Cyberport Entrepreneurship Programmes Graduation Ceremony 2023 today (November 29):

Simon (Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited, Mr Simon Chan), Peter (Chief Executive Officer of the Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited, Mr Peter Yan), George (former Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited, Dr George Lam), distinguished guests, friends, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It's really my great pleasure to be here today to celebrate Cyberport's 20th anniversary and the graduation of a new batch of young start-ups. With double happiness and achievements, it is indeed a great day to remember and celebrate.

Cyberport has been a powerhouse in our ICT (information and communications technology) sector in the past two decades. Growing from strength to strength, Cyberport's community has reached an impressive number of 2 000 technology companies and start-ups on its 20th year of operation, which means a double in the past five years.

Working from a relatively small footprint yet exhibiting an exceptionally high degree of efficiency and energy, Cyberport has made no small achievement as an ICT flagship in Hong Kong. This vibrant community have attracted over \$38 billion of investment. Apart from the seven notable unicorns covering all three major clusters in fintech, smart living and digital entertainment, Cyberport takes pride in nurturing many innovative ideas and exciting business ventures.

Just for the renowned Hong Kong ICT Awards held earlier, 25 start-ups from the Cyberport community grabbed 28 awards from the most competitive arena, including the prestigious Winner of Award of the Year, one Grand Award and seven Gold Awards across eight categories.

Many of Cyberport's achievements as a melting pot of ICT talent and entrepreneurs are attributable to the start-ups home-grown here. They started their adventure at Cyberport with a big idea at a small table. Financial support aside, Cyberport grows together with the start-ups on this platform where people brew their business ideas over co-working space, leverage the extensive network of experts and investors, and immerse themselves in the supportive culture.

The more than 200 graduates today are the best testimony to Cyberport's remarkable journey with the start-ups. The entrepreneurship programme empowers our start-ups to materialise their ideas into commercial solutions and market breakthroughs. I am going to see some of these showcases in a moment, and I will be delighted to hear from you the ups and downs you have undergone in touching this first goalpost in your business.

Twenty years past, Cyberport awaits much more excitement in the years to come. A new expansion block will soon be in place, just two years' time from now at the waterfront, to bring more space for development to the Cyberport community.

Another exciting development is Cyberport's initiative to establish the Artificial Intelligence Supercomputing Centre in phases starting from 2024. This supercomputing facility will be the first of its kind and scale in Hong Kong. I am sure our start-ups, R&D (research and development) community and local industry are looking forward to this and will take a keen interest in the commissioning of the strategic infrastructure very soon.

Before I close, I wish to congratulate again on the 20th anniversary of Cyberport and the graduates of the Entrepreneurship Programme. Your passion and devotion to innovation bring us all here. On behalf of the Government, I thank you for your hard work, and wish you great successes in the future endeavours.

Last but not least, December 10 is another big day for Hong Kong. Please call on your family, friends and I&T (innovation and technology) partners to vote at the District Council Ordinary Election together, for a better community and a better Hong Kong. Thank you very much.



LCQ1: Supply of live poultry

Following is a question by the Hon Tommy Cheung and a reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (November 29):

Question:

Some members of the catering industry have relayed that the pace of recovery of the business of the catering industry has been slow after the epidemic, and Cantonese cuisine in local restaurants has lost much of its lustre as fresh poultry cannot be used as an ingredient. They are of the view that as the risk posed by the avian influenza to Hong Kong has been relatively reduced, the Government must increase the choices of fresh food ingredients available in the market to enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong as a "culinary capital". In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it will consider allowing local farms to keep poultry such as ducks, geese and pigeons on an appropriate scale, so as to resume the supply of such live poultry;
- (2) given that Hong Kong has ceased importing certain types of live poultry from the Mainland for a number of years, whether the Government will consider discussing with the relevant Mainland departments so that the supply of an appropriate amount of live poultry such as ducks, geese and pigeons to Hong Kong will be allowed; and
- (3) whether it will consider supplying live poultry to restaurants under specific control measures, so that traditional dishes prepared with the use of live poultry can continue to be promoted and preserved; if not, of the

reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Upon consulting the Health Bureau, our consolidated reply to the question is as follows:

According to information from the World Health Organization (WHO), the mortality rate of human cases infected with avian influenza A (H5N1) over the past 20 years has exceeded 50 per cent. WHO experts believe that the current avian influenza epidemic poses a continuing risk to humans.

For Hong Kong, since the first human case of avian influenza was detected locally in 1997, Hong Kong experienced seven outbreaks of poultry infected with avian influenza A of H5 or H7 subtypes. Human infection of avian influenza was detected in the 1997 outbreak in which 18 developed the disease, of whom six died. Between 2004 and October 2023, the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health recorded a total of 29 cases (including five deaths) of humans infected with avian influenza. Epidemiological investigations reflected that the source of the risk for avian influenza infection in humans in Hong Kong is from the contact with infected live poultry or its related environment. To safeguard public health, the government has implemented a series of measures at various levels of the live poultry supply chain, to reduce the risk of avian influenza outbreaks. Thus far, the risk of avian influenza in Hong Kong is under control.

(1) Chickens in all local farms in Hong Kong are currently required to receive mandatory vaccination against H5 and H7 avian influenza, and the government has been constantly updating suitable vaccines, to ensure sufficient protection for chickens on farms. Ducks and geese, which are waterfowl, are natural reservoirs of avian influenza viruses. Previous studies showed that live ducks could persistently shed virus even after being vaccinated against avian influenza. Hence, it may not be reliable to use vaccination for the prevention of avian influenza infection in waterfowl. Moreover, while chickens would show significant clinical signs, or even die, after being infected with avian influenza A, waterfowl could be asymptomatic and shed virus for a long time after infection. Since waterfowl mainly sheds virus via the fecal route after being infected with avian influenza, the organic matters inside the fecal samples could affect the results of the rapid test leading to false negative results. Furthermore, different from chickens which could be reared under a well-controlled environment, the rearing of waterfowl generally requires a period of free-ranging outdoors such as outdoor space or pond. Thus, the transmission risk of avian influenza from infected waterfowl to other poultry and humans is much higher than that of chickens.

International experts on avian influenza have also pointed out, that waterfowl could serve as a mixing vessel for different strains of avian influenza viruses. If waterfowl is simultaneously infected with different strains of avian influenza viruses, the viruses can undergo genetic re-

assortment within their bodies, leading to mutation of avian influenza viruses. If the avian influenza virus undergoes genetic mutations, it may reduce the effectiveness of the current mandatory vaccination of chickens against avian influenza, thereby increasing the risk of avian influenza outbreaks in local chicken farms and posing a threat to human health. In view of the above considerations, the government has no plans to allow waterfowl rearing at local farms at this stage.

Regarding rearing of pigeons, pigeons are not waterfowl. In response to the avian influenza epidemic at that time, the industry requested for the surrendering of Livestock Keeping Licences to reduce the risk of avian influenza outbreaks in Hong Kong. The government introduced various voluntary surrender or buyout schemes from 2005 to 2008 for livestock farmers who chose to cease operation voluntarily. Poultry farmers who chose to return their Livestock Keeping Licences received ex-gratia payment. At the time, all pigeon farms in Hong Kong voluntarily returned their licences and ceased operations permanently. Following implementation of these schemes, to reduce the risk of avian influenza transmission, the government has ceased issuing new Livestock Keeping Licences for keeping poultry (including pigeons).

(2) In order to prevent the transmission of avian influenza viruses from waterfowl to chickens, the government the Government has adopted the policy of segregation of chickens from waterfowl at all levels from import to retail since 1998. Legislations were enacted to mandate that live waterfowl must be processed by central slaughtering and prohibit the sale of live waterfowl at retail outlets.

Since 2004, due to the avian influenza situation, live ducks and geese have not been imported from the Mainland to Hong Kong. Given the persistent risk of avian influenza, we have no plans to raise the request with the Mainland authorities, for resuming exports of waterfowl to Hong Kong.

As for other live poultry, including live chickens and minor poultry such as pigeons, there is no ban in Hong Kong on live poultry imports from the Mainland, and the government has been adopting an open mind. Since early 2017, there has been no supply of live poultry to Hong Kong from the Mainland. The Hong Kong SAR government has been maintaining close communication with relevant Mainland authorities regarding different issues of food supply (including live poultry) from the Mainland. We believe the Mainland registered farms supplying live poultry to Hong Kong no longer supplied to Hong Kong mainly based on commercial considerations.

(3) To our understanding, some local restaurants currently purchase local freshly slaughtered chicken from live poultry retailers for cooking. In order to provide more retail outlets for meeting the public demand, we recently conducted risk assessment and considered that the existing biosecurity measures could effectively control the risk of avian influenza associated with live chickens. Therefore, on the basis that prevention of avian influenza transmission will not be compromised, we plan to introduce an appropriate number of live poultry stalls in new public markets or modernised markets that are completely refurbished or redeveloped, as far as

circumstances allow. For example, the new public market to be constructed in Area 67 of Tseung Kwan O will have two live poultry stalls. The new live poultry stalls will adopt designs with stringent hygiene standards and a display window for sale purposes. These stalls will have dedicated slaughtering rooms inside, ensuring complete separation between purchasers and the live poultry. In addition, these stalls will be equipped with independent air conditioning, ventilation and air filtration systems to ensure good hygiene conditions.

In summary, our current containment of avian influenza risk in Hong Kong depends on the implementation of various preventive and control measures across different levels over the years and this achievement did not come by easily. The Hong Kong SAR government will continue to closely monitor outbreaks of avian influenza in neighboring areas, continuously assess the transmission risk of avian influenza and strictly implement various preventive and control measures, while making adjustments as appropriate to safeguard public health.

Thank you, President.