

Two new cases preliminarily tested positive for COVID-19 related to Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (July 26) that it has learnt that there are two new cases preliminarily tested positive for COVID-19 related to the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (SSSH). Upon learning of the cases, the SSSH this morning has thoroughly cleaned and disinfected the places where the persons concerned had stayed and visited, and it will fully cooperate with the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) for the centre's follow-up investigation.

One of the cases involves a worker in the SSSH who is responsible for handling livestock sundry duties at the lairage area. The worker concerned took a COVID-19 test via the CHP following the identification of a confirmed case in the building where he lives. He was notified by the CHP last night that he was preliminarily tested positive for COVID-19. He has been staying home and has not gone to work since July 18.

The other case involves a buyer. He earlier sought medical treatment from a private clinic after feeling unwell and took a virus test. He was informed by the CHP yesterday that he was preliminarily tested positive for COVID-19. He last performed duties on July 25 and had visited SSSH during worktime. He has been wearing a face mask when performing duties.

A spokesman for the FEHD said 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. Upon receiving notification of the first preliminary confirmed case found to be related to a worker in the slaughterhouse on Friday, the SSSH, in addition to regularly undertaking daily thorough cleaning and disinfection work according to the daily clearance arrangement, has immediately conducted additional enhanced deep cleaning and disinfection work at its surrounding areas, offices, rest areas and public facilities in the past three days.

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.

To further protect the health and safety of the workers working at the lairage area, in addition to requiring all workers to wear a face mask in the slaughterhouse, all workers working at the lairage area are additionally given a protective gown every day since yesterday as enhanced protection. As both of the first and second cases work at the lairage area, their employer will arrange for other workers to be tested for the virus again.

The SSSH will maintain close contact with the CHP. The CHP has already contacted the worker and the buyer concerned for follow-up, and has traced their close contacts in the slaughterhouse. Arrangements will be made for them to be tested or isolated if necessary.

The spokesman said, "The Government and the SSSH will endeavour to ensure the smooth operation of the slaughterhouse and that the supply of live pigs will not be affected. 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."

The spokesman added, "Nevertheless, the Center 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."