

Under Secretary for Food and Health inspects pest control work (with photos)

â€‹The Under Secretary for Food and Health and Chairman of the Government's inter-departmental Pest Control Steering Committee, Dr Chui Tak-yi, inspected the mosquito and rodent control work of various departments in Tseung Kwan O and Sham Shui Po this morning (September 21). He also took the opportunity to learn about the effectiveness of departments' use of new technology in anti-mosquito work, as well as the plan to strengthen the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas. He then chaired the 11th meeting of the Steering Committee and listened to the progress reports on preventing and controlling mosquito and rodent infestation by various departments.

Dr Chui started his visit at the Tseung Kwan O South Waterfront Promenade, where he received briefings from various departments including the Home Affairs Department (HAD), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the Civil Engineering and Development Department, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and the Water Supplies Department on anti-mosquito work in facilities under their management as well as the collaborative efforts of relevant departments in tackling mosquito infestation in the green area.

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) demonstrated the large robotics ultra-low volume fogger being tested and the mosquito trapping devices (MTDs) currently in use. The robotics fogger is safe, effective and user-friendly. It can be driven to designated places to spray pesticides when installed on vehicles. The range of the sprayer is wider than that of the knapsack sprayer being used. This can facilitate the fogging operations in large areas and is particularly useful in killing adult mosquitoes in places that are difficult for workers to reach. The FEHD has been conducting field trials in Yuen Long, Sha Tin and Sai Kung Districts since April this year. The initial feedback has been positive and the FEHD is recommending other departments to adopt the technology.

As for the new MTD, it was adopted by the FEHD in 2019. The MTD works on the principle of attracting female mosquitoes to fly in and staining them with insect growth regulator (IGR), which will inhibit the growth of mosquitoes. When these female mosquitoes lay their eggs, they will transfer to the water body the IGR which is capable of inhibiting the mosquito larvae from maturing, thereby greatly reducing the maturing rate and the number of adult mosquitoes. The FEHD confirmed the effectiveness of the MTD in preventing the maturing of mosquito larvae through field testing. Upon engaging the application by other relevant departments and organisations, the MTDs have been found to be effective in reducing mosquito infestation in

different environments. At present, the FEHD, the LCSD, the Housing Department (HD) and several works departments have installed more than 6 500 MTDs in venues with dense vegetation that are difficult to be covered by fogging operations or other control measures with a view to eliminating mosquitoes from the root source.

Dr Chui then proceeded to a rear lane on Tai Nan Street in Sham Shui Po and Pei Ho Street Market to get a better understanding about the collaboration and effectiveness of anti-rodent work by the FEHD and other departments. Staff of the FEHD introduced the enhanced version of the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas to be started in November. The FEHD will expand the scope of rodent control in three districts (Sham Shui Po, Wan Chai and Yuen Long) to conduct large-scale and targeted anti-rodent operations. Taking the Sham Shui Po pilot area as an example, the district is full of "three-nil" buildings, restaurants and fresh provision shops, as well as public markets and many rear lanes. The FEHD will deploy additional resources, including pest control roving teams, rear lane clearance teams and street washing vehicles, to carry out the operations. Different dedicated enforcement teams will also be mobilised to take stringent enforcement action against violation of public health legislation. Moreover, the FEHD will make use of thermal cameras to detect rodent activities when needed. Analysing the rodent traces detected at different stages of the operations will be helpful to the FEHD in devising an appropriate anti-rodent strategy.

At the Steering Committee meeting held in the afternoon, representatives from three bureaux and 20 departments and organisations discussed the way forward in reinforcing collaboration and applying new technologies and equipment to achieve higher effectiveness in mosquito and rodent control efforts.

The representative of the FEHD reported that the territory-wide Gravidtrap Index for *Aedes albopictus* during the rainy season from May to August this year was at a relatively low level similar to the levels of the past years. Since the setting up of a high-level liaison mechanism among the FEHD and various departments in June, all survey areas where the mosquito infestation indices are worthy of attention recorded a drop in the relevant indices.

To extend the dissemination of information and make it easier for the public to grasp the latest situation of mosquito infestation indices, the FEHD has implemented an array of enhancements since May, such as marking the mosquito infestation indices of various levels in different colours on the department's website, and adding interactive maps to indicate the scope of each survey area. The FEHD also provides targeted and specific anti-mosquito recommendations to relevant departments in respect of residential areas, recreational facilities, schools, green areas and more.

In terms of rodent control work, the FEHD reported that the overall Rodent Infestation Rate dropped to 2.8 per cent in the first half of 2021, which was lower than the 3.6 per cent recorded in the second half of 2020. This reflects an improvement in the rodent infestation situation in public

places in Hong Kong and that the rodent infestation in most survey locations is not extensive.

The FEHD and other departments such as the LCSD and the HD, as well as local representatives, private market operators and property management companies, have been in close contact and collaboration under a mechanism aiming to conduct targeted anti-rodent work. Looking forward, relevant departments such as the HAD, the Highways Department, the Buildings Department and the EPD will make every effort to dovetail with the FEHD's enhanced anti-rodent operations in designated target areas when needed in order to maximise the effectiveness.

In addition, the HD reported at the meeting the latest work progress of the Working Group on Rodent Prevention and Control in Public Rental Housing Estates managed by the Housing Authority it co-chaired with the FEHD. The HD implemented more intensive rodent control measures in 20 priority estates from April to June, conducted 46 joint inspections and 60 joint cleaning operations with the FEHD or local stakeholders, and installed more rodent-proofing facilities, etc. The HD launched the second phase of operations in August to implement in 30 priority estates relevant measures for stepping up rodent control efforts.

In order to enhance the effectiveness rodent control in recreational facilities, the LCSD will study the installation of thermal cameras in suitable venues under its management.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the participating departments all agreed that new technologies and equipment should be used to strengthen mosquito and rodent control work. The FEHD will actively research, test and apply new equipment and technologies. It will then introduce to relevant departments such equipment and technologies suitable for use in their venues and provide appropriate support.



