

To Hon. Fred Li Wah-ming

Dear Mr Li

I would like to add my support to the request that now is the time for Mai Po Nature Reserve to be re-opened.

It is understandable that Government acted in a precautionary manner to close Mai Po Nature Reserve. However, since closure and despite intensive monitoring of wild birds (in which I personally and my Company have participated in collaboration with Hong Kong University and WWF HK) and intensive monitoring, no migrant birds have been found carrying H5N1 in Hong Kong this winter and no birds at all have been found with the virus in the northwest New Territories.

Instead, almost all the H5N1 positive birds have been resident species in the urban area. This strongly suggests that the virus has been brought to Hong Kong in captive birds; either in chickens and/or in birds brought in as cagebirds. Indeed, since several of the birds found are popular cagebirds (Magpie-Robin, White-rumped Munia, Japanese White-eye) the role of cagebirds is strongly implicated.

Under these circumstances I see no reason for the continued closure of Mai Po.

Rather, I respectfully suggest that as well as the current and proposed steps to reduce the risk of infection being brought to Hong Kong in chickens, attention be brought to increasing control in importation of wild birds from China for pets or for release ceremonies. Ideally, this trade should be stopped; however at least, monitoring should be increased, birds should be imported in single cages (not several hundred crammed together as happens at present) and deliberate release of wild birds at ceremonies should be illegal.

I look forward to hearing about the LegCo debate in due course.

Yours sincerely

Michael Leven

Dr. Michael R. Leven
Director
Asia Ecological Consultants Limited
127 Commercial Centre, Palm Springs,
Yuen Long, N.T., Hong Kong