

**For discussion on  
14 November 2006**

**Legco Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

**Control of Stray Cow on Lantau Island**

**PURPOSE**

This paper aims to brief Members the Government's actions taken on the control of cattle/buffalo population on Lantau Island.

**BACKGROUND**

2. There are approximately 1,100 stray cattle/buffaloes in Hong Kong. They are mostly the offspring of cattle/buffaloes left behind by farmers when the farmers abandoned farming in the past decades.

3. From 2003 to June 2006, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has received a total of 397 complaints regarding cattle/buffaloes from the public. Upon receipt of the complaints, AFCD has conducted operations to capture these cattle/buffaloes. Captured cattle/buffaloes have been handled according to the Pounds Ordinance (Cap. 168). Under the Pounds Ordinance, if they are not claimed in 4 days, a notice will be published in the Gazette. If they remain unclaimed 7 days after the notice, AFCD will dispose of them accordingly.

**SITUATION AT MUI WO**

4. In 2006, AFCD received 34 complaints (such as hygiene problem cause by the excretion, damage of plants or crops, blockage of road, etc) concerning cattle/buffaloes on Lantau Island, of which 27 were related to Mui Wo. While complainants requested AFCD to capture and remove these animals, local animal welfare organizations such as the Green Lantau Association (GLA) and Living Island Movement (LIM) opposed. These organizations are in favour of maintaining the cattle/buffalo population at a sustainable level instead of depopulation by culling.

5. In order to seek agreement from different concerned parties on the ways to deal with the cattle at Mui Wo, a working group meeting was

convened by AFCD on 13 September 2006. The working group comprises representatives from the Islands District Council, Legislative Council members, local rural committees and Governmental departments. The working group also comprises representatives from a number of local environmental organizations and animal welfare groups including the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), Green Lantau Association (GLA), Living Island Movement (LIM) and Protection of Animals Lantau South (PALS).

6. All members of the working group supported actions to remove cattle from their present locations in Mui Wo to the hillside, and to capture those animals which are sick, old or aggressive. On 22 September 2006, AFCD relocated all 12 cattle from Mui Wo to Kau Ling Chung, a location found to be far away from villages and have water source and grassland for the cattles. A detailed report of the operation is attached at the Appendix. Another operation was carried out on 1 November 2006 and 3 buffalos were captured.

#### **SITUATION AT PUI O**

7. A herd of buffaloes presently inhabits Pui O. A local animal welfare organization, the Lantau Buffalo Association (LBA), had identified a suitable site at Pui O and attempted to set up a buffalo reserve there. However, the attempt was unsuccessful due to objections from local villagers. LBA is yet to identify another suitable location.

8. AFCD conducted a capture operation at Pui O on 3 August 2006, targeting at the sick, old and aggressive buffalos. On 16 September 2006, a local resident at Pui O was injured by a buffalo and was hospitalized. Subsequently, AFCD conducted another capture operation on 27 September 2006. A total of 5 buffaloes were caught in the two operations.

9. To forestall the stray buffalos trespassing into the villages, the Islands District Office will consider to arrange to set up fences at the main roads to fence off the buffalos. The Islands District Office will also consider to arrange to set up signs warning residents about the buffalos.

10. On 11 October 2006, a second working group meeting was held, with additional members from LBA and South Lantau Rural Committee present. The meeting agreed to reduce the buffalo population at Pui O by catching the sick, old and aggressive individuals.

## **WAY FORWARD**

11. In line with the agreement reached at by the Working Group, cattle/buffaloes which are sick, old or aggressive will continue to be removed in small numbers upon receipt of complaints from the public. These operations will also include stray cattle/buffaloes found along main highways (especially the North Lantau Highway) to prevent traffic hazards.

12. Although cattle/buffaloes do not have conservation value, to address the various concerns of the local residents, we shall continue to work through the working group on Lantau Island's cattle to deal with problems arising from the stray cattle/buffaloes.

**Agriculture, Fisheries & Conservation Department**  
**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau**  
**November 2006**

**Report on Mui Wo Cattle Relocation Operation  
held on 22 September 2006**

**Background**

1. A working group meeting was held on 13 September 2006, with representatives from non-government organizations (NGOs) (including the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), Protection of Animals Lantau South (PALS), Green Lantau Association (GLA) and Living Island Movement (LIM)), Islands District Council, local Rural Committee and other governmental departments, as well as Legislative Council members. The objective was to determine the ways to deal with the problem of cattle nuisance in Mui Wo.
2. A consensus was reached to relocate the Mui Wo cattle to a suitable location.

**Assessment of Relocation Site and Preparation**

3. On 19 September 2006, the staff of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) studied the suitability for cattles of the following sites on Lantau Island, Kau Ling Chung, Sunset Peak and Shek Pik Reservoir. The site at Kau Ling Chung was found to be the most suitable for satisfying the basic needs of the cattle.
4. Preparation of the loading site on a piece of government land at Ngan Shek Street, Mui Wo, started at 6:30 pm on 21 September 2006 and lasted until 10 am on the following morning. 12 cattle were rounded and yarded there overnight. They were fed and watered during the period.

**Relocation Exercise**

5. The relocation exercise was held on 22 September 2006, beginning at 10 am. Three Animal Control Teams, headed by a Veterinary Officer, arrived at the scene to move the cattle to Kau Ling Chung.
6. At 11:15 am, during the loading of the cattle onto appropriate vehicles, a member of the public caused agitation in the herd by yelling. He was immediately asked to refrain from such action by the Veterinary Officer. However, one cow was terrified and rammed into the fence, damaged its horns and escaped. The other 11 cattle were loaded onto the vehicles. The Veterinary Officer performed a medical examination of the

11 cattle after loading. There were no abnormalities detected and the cattle were sent to Kau Ling Chung.

7. At 1 pm, the veterinary officer and 2 Animal Control Teams had tracked the escaped cow to Lung Mei Tsuen, Mui Wo. At 1:30 pm, the Veterinary Officer darted the cow with anaesthetics and transported the cow to join the other cattle. Veterinary examination did not indicate the damaged horn needed any further treatment as the bleeding had stopped. No permanent injury was found.

8. At 1:40 pm, NGO members arrived at the Kau Ling Chung site.

9. At 2 pm, the Veterinary Officer arrived at Kau Ling Chung with the 2 Animal Control Teams and the “escaped” cow.

10. At the same time, staff reported to the Veterinary Officer that some of the cattle had their legs protruding from the side of the vehicle on arrival at Kau Ling Chung. Upon examination of the cattle by the Veterinary Officer, it was found that there was no injury to the cattle. All cattle were then successfully unloaded.

11. At 2:15 pm the “escaped” cow was being prepared to be released from the vehicle and the restraints were being untied. However, the “escaped” cow jumped out from the vehicle suddenly and stumbled into the nearby catchwater.

12. The Veterinary Officer examined the “escaped” cow, and found no severe debilitating injury. The position in which the cow was resting was the optimum position to prevent “bloat”. (This would occur if the cow was left resting on its side for a prolonged period of time and was potentially fatal.) Members of the public were advised to leave the cow as it was, as frequent contact would only increase the stress for the cow. However the members of the public ignored the Veterinary Officers’ request and insisted on putting the cow on its side as the NGOs perceived this was a more “comfortable” position. The Veterinary Officer immediately repositioned the animal to a medically correct position. Only AFCD staff was permitted to attend to the cow to ensure its well being.

13. At 2:25 pm the Fire Services Department was called to provide assistance in rescuing the “escaped” cow.

14. At 3:20 pm, the Fire Services Department arrived. They were not able to assist in rescuing the cow, as they were not equipped with a crane. The Veterinary Officer considered that lifting the cow with manpower only would cause extra stress to the cow, which would lead to potentially

fatal consequences for the cow. At 3:38 pm, AFCD staff called for a crane lorry.

15. At 5:09 pm, the “escaped” cow was rescued from the catchwater with the crane lorry. On veterinary examination by the Veterinary Officer, there was no debilitating injury detected and the cow had not sustained any fractures or severe injuries to any of its four limbs and was able to walk. The “escaped” cow was then released to join the rest of the herd.

16. From 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm, a Senior Field Officer and one Animal Control Team continued to monitor the status of the cattle.

17. Throughout the whole operation, Senior Veterinary Officer had been kept fully informed of the situation by phone.

### **Follow-up and Monitoring of the Relocated Cattle**

18. Follow-up monitoring was performed by AFCD staff on 23 September 2006. The cattle were tired but appeared to be adapting to the new environment.

19. Upon further monitoring performed by AFCD staff on 24 September 2006, it was reported that one of the cattle, the “escaped” cow, had passed away overnight. The Veterinary Officer performed an examination, and determined that there were no suspicious circumstances of the death, and concluded that the cow had passed away due to stress.

20. The other cattle were seen adjusting to the new environment. AFCD staff assisted in feeding the cattle to help the cattle to adjust to the new environment.

21. On 29 September 2006, follow up monitoring photo showed that the cattle were adjusting satisfactorily.

**Agriculture, Fisheries & Conservation Department  
November 2006**