



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局  
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat  
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
The People's Republic of China

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本局檔案： in FH/CR 1/3821/05 Pt. 7  
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25 March 2008

Ms Flora Tai,  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene  
3rd floor,  
Citibank Tower,  
3 Garden Road,  
Hong Kong

Dear Ms. Tai,

**LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**  
**Closure of Mai Po Nature Reserve**

Thank you for your letter dated 7 March 2008 regarding Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki's enquiry. Our response is contained in the ensuing paragraphs.

Overseas studies have shown that migratory water birds are a natural reservoir of the highly pathogenic H5 avian influenza (AI) virus. These birds may infect poultry along their migration routes and spread the virus to other birds when congregating.

Every year, over 100 000 migratory birds visit Hong Kong and Mai Po Nature Reserve (the Reserve) is the major congregation place for these birds, especially water birds. These birds in the Reserve attract many visitors.

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene held on 11 July 2006, the Administration briefed Members on the management of public access to the Reserve, Wetland Park / Walk-in Aviaries. The Administration explained that, if any dead bird was found to harbour H5 virus within 3 km in radius of the Reserve, the outdoor section of the Wetland Park and walk-in aviaries, we would recommend the premises / facilities in question be closed to public access for a period of 21 days.

This precautionary measure equally applies to premises / facilities with a high concentration of wild birds, especially water birds, or birds in captivity that may come into close contact with humans. These include the Wetland Park and the walk-in aviaries managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). It has taken into account guidelines of the World Organization of Animal Health and the circumstances in Hong Kong. Its purpose is to minimize public contact with wild birds, especially water birds, or their droppings so as to reduce the risk of an AI epidemic. We are very grateful to the operators of the premises / facilities concerned for their cooperation for facilitating the implementation of this precautionary measure.

In other places where sick / dead birds suspected of having the H5 virus are found, the Administration would take the necessary cleaning and disinfection actions, where appropriate, and enhanced surveillance. In the Tuen Mun Park (the Park) case that Dr Hon Kwok has referred to, it does not have a walk-in aviary. After birds suspected to have harboured H5 virus were collected from the Park in November and December 2007, the LCSD thoroughly cleaned and disinfected the place. In the 21 days that followed, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) enhanced its wild bird monitoring programme at the Park and its vicinity. No significant congregation of wild birds or irregularity was found.

The one-off ex-gratia payment given to tenants in Yuen Po Street Bird Garden last year was not a compensation but rather a one-off measure to assist the trade in adjusting to the sudden impact of the disease outbreak, including the continual responsibility in keeping the birds put under quarantine when the shop in Bird Garden was declared an infected place.

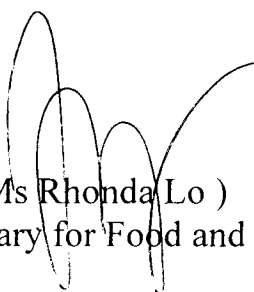
The AFCD has been working with the World Wide Fund Hong Kong (WWF) in managing the Reserve. For example, in 2007-08, the service contract and subvention that we made to WWF amount to \$1.3 million. We will continue to consider proposals from WWF for the betterment of the habitat management at the Reserve. One possibility is the application for Environment and Conservation Fund

(the Fund) that supports non-profit making organizations on education, research, technical development or any other activity related to environmental protection and conservation. The Fund received an injection of \$1 billion in January 2008.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Miss Joyce Kok at 2973 8139.

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several large, overlapping loops and curves, characteristic of a cursive or stylized signature.

( Ms Rhonda Lo )  
for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Secretary for Environment (Fax : 2147 3287)  
Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (Fax : 2311 3731)