

Subcommittee on Food Business (Amendment) Regulation 2009

Administration's response to issues raised at the Subcommittee meeting on Friday, 29 May 2009

PURPOSE

This paper sets out the Administration's response to issues raised by the Subcommittee at its meeting on 29 May 2009.

BACKGROUND

2. At the above meeting, Members requested the Administration to provide a response in writing on -
 - (a) whether any fish tank water samples taken from licensed food premises and market stalls selling live fish or live shell fish, which had exceeded the statutory limit for *E. coli* count in the past, were synthetic seawater or seawater provided by suppliers; and if so, the numbers involved; and
 - (b) how many food poisoning cases occurred in the past 10 years were caused by consuming seafood kept in fish tank water by licensed food premises and market stalls in LYM.

ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

Fish tank water found in breach of the statutory *E. coli* limit

3. In the five years from 2004 to 2008, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) took out 38 prosecutions against 35 licensed / permitted food premises or public market stalls whose fish tank water had been found in breach of the statutory limit of *E. coli*. According to FEHD records, 23 of these 35 premises used natural seawater for keeping live seafood at the time of offence, while 11 used synthetic seawater. There was no information on the remaining premises and verification could not be carried out as the licence of which had been cancelled.

Food poisoning cases

4. The Government does not have information on food poisoning cases related to the consumption of seafood kept in fish tank water by licensed / permitted food premises and public market stalls in Lei Yue Mun (LYM). For reference, the number of General Restaurants (GRs) in LYM involved in food-borne disease investigations in the five years from 2004 to 2008 is shown in the table below, along with the territory-wide figures. However, these cases may or may not be related to seafood kept in fish tank water.

| Year | LYM | | | Hong Kong | | |
|------|--|-------------------|--------------|--|-------------------|--------------|
| | No. of GRs involved in food-borne disease investigations | Total no. of GRs* | Percentage % | No. of GRs involved in food-borne disease investigations | Total no. of GRs* | Percentage % |
| 2004 | 0 | 20 | 0 % | 338 | 7 949 | 4.3 % |
| 2005 | 1 | 20 | 5 % | 406 | 8 020 | 5.1 % |
| 2006 | 3 | 20 | 15 % | 469 | 8 024 | 5.8 % |
| 2007 | 0 | 20 | 0 % | 316 | 8 158 | 3.9 % |
| 2008 | 2 | 20 | 10 % | 268 | 8 274 | 3.2 % |

** figures reflect the position as at the last day of the year*

Food and Health Bureau
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