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**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 6 July 2010**

**Rodent control in Hong Kong**

**Purpose**

This paper gives an account of the past discussions by the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("the Panel") on the rodent prevention and control measures of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD").

**Background**

2. To monitor the situation of rodent infestation, FEHD has been conducting territory-wide rodent infestation rate ("RIR") surveys in the public areas annually since 2000 by setting baits in selected localities. The localities covered in the surveys are selected from different districts over the territory and are either rodent trouble spots or areas likely to have rodent problems, particularly those with frequent human activities. Twice a year in the selected localities, around 100 baits are placed in each locality and each bait is placed at least 50 metres apart to ensure coverage of a sufficiently large area. The ratio of baits bitten of the selected localities will be the RIR of that particular locality. The results, when aggregated, will give the territory-wide overall RIR. A summary of the annual RIRs for the whole territory and for each of the 19 districts from 2005 to 2009 is in the **Appendix**.

3. When RIR of any selected locality rises above 10%, FEHD will carry out rodent disinfestation operations throughout the entire area under survey. For a locality with RIR at or higher than 20%, the relevant government departments will form a joint task force and launch a special rodent control operation programme to provide comprehensive rodent disinfestations and enhanced cleansing services.

4. In addition to implementing rodent prevention and control measures on a regular basis to maintain environmental hygiene, FEHD also organises annual territory-wide interdepartmental anti-rodent campaigns to raise public awareness and coordinate community efforts to tackle the problem. Every year, the campaign selects specific kinds of environment (biotopes) (e.g. markets, hawker bazaars and licensed food premises) where dedicated rodent control, publicity and educational

efforts are made by relevant government departments.

### **Past discussions**

5. At the meeting of the Panel on 13 May 2008, the Administration briefed members on the rodent prevention and control measures of FEHD, including the Anti-rodent Campaign 2008.

6. Concern was raised about the effectiveness of the anti-rodent campaigns to tackle the rodent problem. Despite a steady decline in the numbers of rodents collected during the anti-rodent campaigns from 2005 to 2007, the overall RIR in 2007 was higher than those in 2005 and 2006.

7. The Administration advised that it was not appropriate to make direct comparisons between the overall RIRs and the numbers of rodents collected during the anti-rodent campaigns, as the localities covered in the RIR surveys were different from those covered in the anti-rodent campaigns.

8. Question was raised as to why the numbers of warnings issued had risen, whereas the numbers of rodents collected had dropped, during the anti-rodent campaigns in the past three years from 2005 to 2007.

9. The Administration surmised that this could be due to the awareness-raising campaigns which encouraged the reporting of problems to the authorities.

10. Members noted that the Anti-rodent Campaign 2008 would last for 12 weeks, whereas the duration of each anti-rodent campaign conducted from 2005 to 2007 was only four weeks. They enquired whether the extension of the duration of the campaign was due to the worsening of the rodent problem.

11. The Administration explained that the extension of the duration of the Anti-rodent Campaign 2008 was made in response to the recent public concern about rodent infestation. The manpower required to cope with the work was made available through internal redeployment within FEHD.

12. Regarding the experience and expertise of FEHD staff on rodent control, the Administration advised that FEHD's Pest Control Advisory Section was staffed by 18 Pest Control Officers ("PCOs") who would provide professional advice on the prevention and control of public health pests to government departments and the general public. All PCOs had a university degree and relevant post-graduation pest control experience. Each FEHD's district pest control team in all 19 districts had about nine to 22 staff.

13. Hon WONG Yung-kan asked how the Administration would address the public concern that the rodent problem had worsened in areas where there were licensed food premises operating on a 24-hour basis.

14. The Administration responded that there was no clear evidence so far to suggest that licensed food premises operating on a 24-hour basis had exacerbated rodent infestation. FEHD had a team of staff responsible for carrying out regular and ad hoc inspections to licensed food premises which operated at night time.

15. On whether the Administration had conducted any virus tests on rodent caught to prevent the spread of diseases by rodents, the Administration advised that rodents caught would be dissected to see if there were any signs of plague infection. No specimens had been tested positive so far. Blood tests would also be taken to check if there was any hantaviral disease.

### **Latest developments**

16. In his reply to a written question raised by Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG at the Council meeting on 29 April 2009, the Secretary for Food and Health advised, amongst others, the following new initiatives to step up anti-rodent efforts in districts -

- (a) since mid-2008, the duration of each of the two phases of the anti-rodent campaign launched each year has been extended to a minimum of nine weeks as circumstances require. Moreover, more targeted spots (such as markets, hawker bazaars, fixed pitch hawker stalls, food premises) have been included;
- (b) since 1 June 2008, the operating hours of the live rodent collection service have been extended to 24 hours a day throughout the year;
- (c) territory-wide publicity and public education activities have been stepped up, and anti-rodent messages have been disseminated to residents in various districts through posters, leaflets and talks on rodent control;
- (d) relevant departments are immediately informed of RIR recorded in various districts for timely adjustment to their rodent prevention and control measures, and for control of rodent infestation in good time; and
- (e) since 1 April 2009, one additional health inspector has been deployed to each district to oversee and coordinate the rodent prevention and disinfection work carried out by FEHD and other government departments and local organisations, including the Home Affairs Department, the Lands Department, the District Council concerned, Area Committees and Owners' Committees. District health inspectors will also assist in taking forward pest control campaigns and public education and publicity activities etc. at the district level. FEHD has also deployed additional inspection staff to further strengthen front-line supervision and enhance service standard.

**Relevant papers**

17. Members are invited to access the Legislative Council website (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>) for details of the relevant paper and minutes of the meeting.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
30 June 2010

**Rodent infestation rates (RIRs)  
for the whole territory and for each of the 19 districts  
from 2005 to 2009**

<b>District</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
Central & Western	4.7%	1.5%	7.5%	5.7%	4.7%
Eastern	1.5%	1.8%	3.2%	4.4%	8.1%
Southern	3.1%	4.2%	6.0%	4.0%	6.5%
Wan Chai	6.0%	5.2%	8.5%	8.1%	1.6%
Islands	2.7%	7.3%	6.6%	7.9%	9.3%
Kowloon City	3.1%	2.6%	3.6%	4.2%	5.0%
Kwun Tong	4.4%	5.6%	5.3%	5.3%	12.4%
Wong Tai Sin	3.1%	1.6%	3.0%	6.9%	7.5%
Sham Shui Po	4.3%	1.2%	3.9%	6.5%	7.8%
Mong Kok	9.0%	1.7%	4.7%	6.8%	2.0%
Yau Tsim	6.6%	4.3%	3.0%	5.7%	5.4%
Sai Kung	4.1%	2.0%	9.0%	8.4%	5.4%
Sha Tin	3.6%	2.8%	0.5%	5.5%	5.5%
Tai Po	4.6%	0.5%	3.9%	11.0%	1.8%
North	5.3%	3.9%	5.9%	6.5%	7.2%
Kwai Tsing	4.7%	1.2%	1.7%	4.9%	3.1%
Tsuen Wan	5.6%	3.3%	5.9%	13.3%	5.1%
Tuen Mun	3.2%	3.6%	5.4%	1.7%	8.3%
Yuen Long	3.0%	4.4%	5.3%	5.3%	6.6%
<b>Territory-wide overall RIR</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>