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Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 11 June 2013**

Rodent control

Purpose

This paper summarizes the concerns of the members of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("the Panel") on rodent control.

Background

2. To monitor the situation of rodent infestation, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") has been conducting territory-wide rodent infestation rate ("RIR") surveys in public areas since 2000. RIR is used to assess rodent problems at different places so as to take prompt action to prevent their proliferation. RIR of a district is calculated with reference to the ratio of baits bitten in that district. In 2012, RIRs obtained in the 19 selected districts ranged from 0% to 7.9% and the overall RIR was 2.4%. A summary of RIRs for the whole territory from 2000 to 2012 and for each of the 19 selected districts in 2012 is in the **Appendix I**.

3. According to FEHD, it will carry out rodent disinfestation operations in a particular district if its RIR rises above 10%. For a district with RIR reaching 20% or higher, FEHD will set up a task force to liaise and coordinate anti-rodent work among relevant government departments and local organizations such as District Councils and owners' committees. Rodent disinfestation, cleansing and publicity as well as education in the community will also be strengthened.

4. In addition to implementing rodent prevention and control measures on a regular basis to maintain environmental hygiene, FEHD also organizes

anti-rodent campaigns to raise public awareness and coordinate community efforts to tackle the rodent problem.

5. According to the Administration, the estimated expenditure involved in rodent control work in 2013-2014 is \$152.3 million. FEHD and its contractors have a total workforce of about 2 260 in providing pest control services.

Deliberations of the Panel

6. The Panel discussed rodent control at three meetings between 2008 and 2012. The deliberations and concerns of members are summarized below.

Rodent prevention and control measures

7. Many members expressed concern about the rodent problem in markets, wharfs, old districts as well as in areas where there was a high concentration of restaurants. They urged the Administration to step up rodent prevention and control measures in these areas. Some other members, however, expressed worry that the arrangement to step up the rodent disinfection and cleansing work in areas with high RIR might make the rodents migrate from one area to another area. In their view, the Administration should strengthen rodent prevention and control measures across the whole territory.

8. According to the Administration, it was rare that rodents would move from one district to another district given their limited range of movement. In conducting anti-rodent operations, FEHD would take into account RIRs of the areas concerned, the complaint figures and the views of the local community. FEHD would also organize territory-wide interdepartmental anti-rodent campaigns every year to promote the continuous and active participation of the public in rodent prevention and control work.

9. Some members were concerned that licensed food premises operating on a 24-hour basis might aggravate the rodent problem in the area. According to the Administration, there was no clear evidence to suggest that licensed food premises operating on a 24-hour basis would increase the risk of rodent infestation. To enhance anti-rodent control work, FEHD staff carried out regular and ad hoc inspections to licensed food premises operating at night time.

10. Some members expressed concern about the methods and techniques for rodent control adopted by the Administration. They queried whether RIRs could genuinely reflect the rodent problem of the districts. In particular, these members pointed out that RIRs for some districts were 0% which implied that

these districts were rodent-free. They questioned the yardstick for measuring the effectiveness of the rodent prevention and control measures of FEHD.

11. According to the Administration, FEHD had been adopting a comprehensive approach in rodent control, i.e. tracing the trails left by rodents, taking a variety of measures including poisoning and trapping of rodents and destroying rat holes. The approach and measures were basically the same as those adopted in major overseas and Mainland cities. The rodenticide used by FEHD was also widely adopted in different countries/cities. As regards the reliability of RIR, members were advised that FEHD would set baits in selected localities to gather statistics on the ratio of baits bitten by rodents. The localities in the surveys covered rodent infested spots or areas likely to have rodent problems in the territory. According to the Administration, there was no internationally adopted RIR. FEHD had made reference to the practices adopted by different countries and cities and tried out different methods when devising its RIR. The method currently adopted was considered most suitable for Hong Kong with respect to the local situation and environment.

12. Members were further advised that the lower or 0% RIR recorded in certain districts indicated that the rodent problem in public areas of these districts were largely under control. According to the Administration, it would be difficult for the territory to maintain rodent-free.

13. There was concern about the selection of bait locations. Some members enquired about whether the bait locations could be regularly rotated and whether baits could be placed at spots where there were reports that people were bitten by rodents. There was also a suggestion that gratings should be installed at all underground drainage outlets in the vicinity of markets and fresh food outlets, as they were found effective in preventing rodents from coming out from the drainage pipes on Chun Yeung Street in North Point after the installation.

14. According to the Administration, the selection of bait locations was based on established scientific criteria. The locations should be fixed for the whole year in order to enable FEHD to monitor the trend of rodent infestation. Direct rodent control measures, such as trapping, would be carried out at spots where there were reports that people were bitten by rodents so as to immediately suppress the rodent population. As regards the installation of gratings, members were advised that gratings had been installed at the underground drainage outlets of the Central and Western District and Chep Lap Kok. FEHD would continue to work with the Highways Department and the Drainage Services Department in exploring the feasibility of installing gratings in other locations.

Publicity and public education

15. Members sought information about the measures to motivate the active participation of the community to achieve better results in rodent control. The Administration advised that since April 2009, FEHD had deployed an additional health inspector to each district to promote and coordinate district pest control operations and to conduct public education and publicity activities at the district level to enhance public awareness of pest control. It had also strengthened liaison with other government departments and local organizations to promote greater community involvement in rodent control and prevention.

Disposal of dead rodents in public areas

16. Some members requested the Administration to pay due attention to the need to dispose of dead rodents in public areas. They expressed concern that FEHD's contractor staff engaged in the provision of pest control services might not have the expertise to carry out the rodent control work as the service contract might be awarded to the tenderer with the lowest tender price.

17. The Administration assured members that FEHD would assess both the technical merits and the tender price of a tender. A tenderer bidding for the contract for the provision of pest control services must meet the requirements that contract manager and supervisory staff should have no less than five years' and three years' relevant working experience respectively, and the frontline staff should receive seven hours' training on pest control. FEHD would also conduct daily and surprise site inspections and review service reports submitted by contractors.

Relevant papers

18. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix II**.

二零零零年至二零一二年全年鼠患參考指數
Annual Rodent Infestation Rates for 2000 – 2012

年份 Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
鼠患參考指數	16.0%	8.8%	9.0%	5.6%	4.1%	4.4%	2.9%	4.8%	6.3%	6.1%
Rodent Infestation Rate										
年份 Year	2010	2011	2012							
鼠患參考指數	1.5%	1.7%	2.4%							
Rodent Infestation Rate										

二零一二年鼠患參考指數
Rodent Infestation Rates in 2012

地區	District	二零一二 上半年 First half of 2012	二零一二 下半年 Second half of 2012	二零一二 全年 Overall of 2012
中/西區	Central/Western	1.6 %	0.5%	1.1%
東區	Eastern	4.5 %	1.9%	3.2%
南區	Southern	2.2 %	2.2%	2.2%
灣仔區	Wan Chai	1.8 %	3.6%	2.7%
離島區	Islands	0.0 %	0.0%	0.0%
九龍城區	Kowloon City	7.4 %	3.7%	5.6%
觀塘區	Kwun Tong	7.1 %	1.0%	4.1%
旺角區	Mong Kok	1.7 %	2.5%	2.1%
深水埗區	Sham Shui Po	1.8 %	5.8%	3.8%
黃大仙區	Wong Tai Sin	3.8 %	3.8%	3.8%
油尖區	Yau Tsim	2.7 %	0.9%	1.8%
北區	North	1.2 %	1.2%	1.2%
西貢區	Sai Kung	0.0 %	0.0%	0.0%
沙田區	Shatin	0.9 %	0.9%	0.9%
大埔區	Tai Po	2.7 %	0.0%	1.3%
荃灣區	Tsuen Wan	0.0 %	2.0%	1.0%
屯門區	Tuen Mun	3.3 %	0.0%	1.7%
元朗區	Yuen Long	11.4 %	4.3%	7.9%
葵青區	Kwai Tsing	2.0 %	1.0%	1.5%
鼠患參考指數	Rodent Infestation Rate	2.9 %	1.9%	2.4%

資料來源：食物環境衛生署

Source: Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Relevant papers on rodent control

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	13.5.2008 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes CB(2)128/08-09(01)
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	6.7.2010 (Item II)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	11.7.2012 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes

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