

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Animal Welfare
and Cruelty to Animals

**Additional information requested by the Subcommittee
on issues related to pet food**

Purpose

At the meeting on 25 April 2016, Members of the Subcommittee raised a number of issues relating to the safety of pet food products in Hong Kong. Specifically, Members asked the Government to provide the following information –

- (a) in relation to the study being contemplated by the Government on commercial pet food available in Hong Kong, the details of the study including:
 - (i) the timetable for launching the study and the estimated time for completion;
 - (ii) the scope of the study, including, inter alia, the sampling size and types of pet food products to be taken for testing, the inspection frequency, the microbial contaminants and substances of concern to be focused on in the tests, and the study method to be adopted;
 - (iii) the estimated cost, if available, to be incurred for conducting the study;
- (b) the number of complaint cases received involving false trade descriptions of pet food products under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362) and the follow-up actions taken by the

Customs and Excise Department, including prosecutions instituted;
and

- (c) information on whether the economies supplying pet food products to Hong Kong have dedicated legislation regulating the safety of pet food products.

2. This note sets out the information sought.

(a) Proposed study on pet food products in Hong Kong

3. As reported to the Sub-committee meeting on 25 April 2016 (via LC Paper No. CB(2)1328/15-16(01)), we consider that there are merits in conducting regular testing on pet food products in Hong Kong. Our initial proposal will focus on random sampling and testing of commercial pet food products for dogs, cats and other companion animals that are sold through retail channels, such as pet shops, supermarket and veterinary clinics.

4. Since dogs and cats are the most common type of pets in Hong Kong, around 70% of the samples will be collected from pet food for dogs and cats, while the remaining samples will include other types of pet food, including pet food for other companion animals, treats, pet food sold online and homemade pet food.

5. In the study, we target to test around 200 to 300 products during a two-year period. The focus of the test should be on a few common micro-organisms and contaminants, by making reference to the studies conducted by the Consumer Council, and other overseas regulatory authorities. The testing results will be released for public information.

6. We will handle the procurement of the services for the study in accordance with the Stores and Procurement Regulations, which include preparation of tender documents, invitation of tenders through open tender, and selection of service providers via a tender committee based on the endorsed assessment criteria. We are aiming at commencing the study by the end of 2016.

(b) Complaint cases received involving false trade descriptions of pet food products under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362) received by the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED)

7. The Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362) prohibits any person from applying false or misleading trade descriptions to goods in the course of trade or business. The Ordinance applies to general goods including pet food, while “trade description” covers information such as composition and place of origin.

8. From 1 January 2012 to 31 March 2016, C&ED received a total of 20 complaints about pet food suspected of violating provisions in the Ordinance. After investigation by C&ED, 19 complaints were concluded with no further action, as no violation of the Ordinance was found. An advisory letter was issued to the trader concerned for the remaining one case¹ since there was insufficient evidence to initiate prosecution.

(c) Import of pet food products in Hong Kong

9. According to the information gathered by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) from some pet food companies, about 70% of the pet owners in Hong Kong feed their pets with commercial pet food. Most of these pet food products are pre-packaged and imported from places outside Hong Kong. According to the statistics collected by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), dog or cat food imports amounted to 35.3 million Kg in 2015. The United States (US) is the largest source of pre-packaged/processed pet food imported into Hong Kong, accounting for over 40% of the pet food imported. Other major suppliers include countries belonging to the European Union (EU), including Belgium, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, Canada, Thailand, the Mainland of China, Japan, and South Africa. In 2015, over 90% of the total amount of dog or cat food imports in Hong Kong came from the above places.

¹ According to C&ED, the case was about a complainant alleging that a brand of hedgehog food he purchased from a local retailer was for cats instead of hedgehogs as claimed.

10. Based on information available on the internet, it is noted that there are specific regulatory measures to safeguard the safety of pet food products in these places. Major pet food exporters, such as the US, the EU, the Mainland of China, Japan and South Africa, have put in place regulations governing the manufacture, packaging, and labeling of pet food products. The EU and Japan have enacted specific laws on animal feed including pet food, and the US has put in place a single regulatory regime governing food for both human and animal consumption².

11. In Canada, the Government has imposed certain regulatory regimes applying to pet food products, including regulation covering labelling and advertising of pet food products, and enhanced animal health safeguards requiring all pet food produced and sold to be free of specified risk materials³. In addition, the Pet Food Association of Canada has also provided guidelines on manufacturing of pet food products for the industry. In Thailand, according to our understanding, pet food production is regulated by the relevant authority.

**Food and Health Bureau
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
May 2015**

² Information note on “regulation of pet food in selected overseas places” (IN02/15-16) prepared by Research Office, Information Services Division of the LegCo Secretariat in April 2016

³ Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) concentrates in certain tissues are known as specified risk materials.