

**For discussion
on 24 April 2017**

**LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Animal Rights**

Management of Stray Cattle

INTRODUCTION

This paper briefs Members on the measures adopted by the Government in managing stray cattle, including controlling the population of stray cattle, as well as addressing the nuisance caused to the public.

BACKGROUND

2. According to a territory-wide population survey of stray cattle commissioned by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) in 2013, there were approximately 1,100 heads of stray cattle in Hong Kong. They were primarily distributed in four areas, namely Lantau Island, Sai Kung/Ma On Shan, Northeast New Territories and Central New Territories.

3. There are divergent views in the community on how best stray cattle should be managed. Some are of the view that stray cattle have ecological value and should be protected. In addition, as part of the community, stray cattle should be allowed to live freely in their original dwelling places. On the other hand, there are views that stray cattle should be relocated because they cause obstruction to traffic, affect environmental hygiene, cause nuisance to the daily lives of residents, and may damage crops at times.

MEASURES ON THE MANAGEMENT OF STRAY CATTLE

4. The Government has adopted a multi-pronged approach for managing stray cattle. We have been making continuous efforts to explore enhanced measures that will help minimise the nuisances caused by stray cattle while safeguarding their welfare. To facilitate the work on this front, AFCD has set up a dedicated Cattle Management Team to carry out a series of measures on the management of stray cattle since 2011.

The “Capture-Sterilisation-Relocation” Programme

5. One of the key measures is the “Capture-Sterilisation-Relocation” (CSR) programme implemented by AFCD mainly in Sai Kung and Lantau Island, under which the wandering cattle frequently found to have caused obstruction to traffic are captured, sterilised and relocated to more remote locations. Prior to the relocation, AFCD will conduct assessments to ensure that the cattle are in good health condition and can forage properly in the new location.

6. Over the past five years, a total of 744, 379 and 483 brown cattle and buffaloes (including those repeatedly captured) were captured, surgically sterilised and relocated respectively under the CSR programme. AFCD conducts weekly on-site inspections of the places to which the cattle are relocated to observe their conditions, and finds that most of the relocated cattle are clinically healthy.

7. The CSR programme has been found by and large effective in preventing the cattle from moving back to the urban areas or roads, thereby helping reduce the nuisance and risk of traffic accidents caused by them. AFCD will consider enhancing the implementation of CSR programme in other districts and identify suitable sites for the relocation of cattle having taken into account views of stakeholders (including residents of the districts and animal welfare groups concerned).

“Gonacon” Feasibility Study

8. In addition, AFCD has been studying the feasibility of sterilising cattle chemically with the use of a contraceptive drug named Gonacon. The study has been conducted in two phases in selected herds in different districts. The first phase, involving testing of the drug in captive cattle, was completed in 2014. It was found that the drug yielded a success rate of approximately 70% in sterilising cattle. The second phase of testing the drug in free-roaming cattle and buffaloes has been completed in 2016. For cattle, similar result was shown as in the first phase. The success rate in sterilising buffaloes is being further studied by AFCD. Based on the above results, AFCD is considering if this method of chemical sterilisation could be applied more extensively across the territory, and further ascertaining the long term effectiveness of the chemical sterilisation by monitoring the cattle and buffaloes for a longer period of time.

Cattle Grid

9. There are voices demanding cattle grids to be installed in certain areas such as Sai Kung to help minimise the chance for stray cattle to enter urban areas, thereby reducing the nuisance to the public and obstruction to traffic, or even traffic accident. For example, in Sai Kung, according to the information provided by the Police, there were a total of 84 reports of cattle-related traffic accidents and road obstruction outside the Pak Tam Chung Barrier Gate from 2013 to 2016.

10. Cattle grids could be found on farms or roads in some overseas countries, such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States for confining cattle to a certain area. They are normally placed at locations to prevent the cattle from wandering outside the area, without affecting passage of pedestrians and other road users.

11. According to the Transport Department (TD), cattle grids are more commonly available in private areas in overseas countries. There are potential safety hazards if they are installed on public roads, which are set out below:

- (a) cattle grid may cause skidding and can be hazardous to pedal cycles and motor cycles;
- (b) bicycle wheels might be trapped in the gap of the grid and cyclists must therefore dismount and pass through a separate passage (see (c) below);
- (c) pedestrians may get injured if they walk over the cattle grid and get trapped in the gap. A separate passage with a gate should be built next to the cattle grid for the pedestrians as well as cyclists. The gate should normally be closed in order to prevent cattle from passing. That said, provision of a dedicated passage for pedestrians may not totally prevent injuries from happening if some pedestrians deliberately walk over the cattle grid; and
- (d) cattle grid may not be suitable for heavy vehicles. If the grid is damaged due to passage of heavy vehicles, those vehicles with small wheels could get caught in the damaged grid.

12. In TD's view, if a cattle grid is to be installed on a public road, the facility should be properly designed, installed, managed and maintained in order to reduce the risks to other road users.

13. Notwithstanding TD's concerns, AFCD has been exploring the feasibility of installing cattle grid on a trial basis to assess its effectiveness in the Hong Kong context. A cattle grid installed in AFCD's Ta Kwu Ling Operation Centre has found to be effective in confining the cattle from leaving the Centre's area, and no cattle has been injured by the grid so far. It is also found that the grid could support the passage of heavy vehicles.

14. After numerous site visits and discussions with the animal welfare groups concerned, AFCD has been exploring the installation of a cattle grid in Sai Kung Country Park, and liaising closely with concerned departments on the technical feasibility, practicability, and implications to pedestrians and road users of the installation.

ADVICE SOUGHT

15. Members are invited to note the measures adopted by the Government on the management of stray cattle.

**Food and Health Bureau
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Transport Department
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