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**AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND
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3 January 2020

The Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn: Mr. Anthony CHU)

Dear Mr. CHU,

**Public Accounts Committee
Consideration of Chapter 4 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 73
Control of wild and stray animal nuisances**

Thank you for your letters of 17 December 2019 to the Secretary for the Environment and to this department concerning Chapter 4 of the Director of Audit's Report No 73. We are pleased to provide a consolidated reply in the Appendix.

For any further questions, please contact the undersigned or our Senior Wetland and Fauna Conservation Officer, Mr. CHEUNG Ka-shing (Tel. 2150 6920) and our Principal Veterinary Officer, Dr. Kenny HO (Tel. 2150 7179).

Yours sincerely,

(SO Ping-man)

for Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Encl.

c.c. Secretary for the Environment (Fax: 2537 7278)
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Fax: 2147 5239)
Secretary for Food and Health (Fax: 2136 3282)
Director of Audit (Fax: 2583 9063)

**Response to the questions asked and information requested by
the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council
in relation to the control of wild and stray animal nuisances in
Chapter 4 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 73**

(I) For the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Part 1: Introduction

Measures for controlling animal nuisances

- 1) According to paragraphs 1.8 and 1.9, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) whether the feeding of wild animals is permitted in places outside the designated Feeding Ban Area as shown in Figure 1 of paragraph 1.8;

Feeding of wild animals outside feeding ban areas established under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) is not subject to the control of the said Ordinance. However, various departments, including the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Housing Department, may issue fixed penalty notices under the Fixed Penalty (Public Cleanliness and Obstruction) Ordinance (Cap. 570) to persons found to have dirtied public areas while feeding wild animals.

(b) regarding the seven valid special permits which allow holders to feed wild animals in specified places as mentioned in Note 5 to paragraph 1.8, of the areas and sites covered holder(s), types of wild animals that can be fed and other relevant details of each permit;

Holders of the seven valid special permits include six members of the public who had been feeding monkeys habitually before the feeding ban was imposed, and the contractor of the monkey contraceptive programme implemented by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) (i.e. Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong (OPCFHK)). Apart from the special permit granted to the contractor for assisting in the monkey population survey and capturing monkeys for sterilisation, the rest of the permits are transitional in nature. AFCD will not accept new applications and the need to retain such arrangement will also be assessed when the monkey management action plan is reviewed and updated in 2020.

(c) in each of the past five years, of the respective numbers of complaints received from members of the public against monkeys, wild pigs and feral pigeon nuisances; the numbers of actions taken to deal with such nuisances, and the numbers of prosecutions instituted against illegal feeding of wild animals; the numbers of successful prosecutions instituted; and among the successful prosecutions instituted against illegal feeding of wild animals, of the maximum and minimum penalties imposed; and

The number of complaints from the public against monkey, wild pig and feral pigeon nuisances received by AFCD over the past 5 years is as follows:

Number of complaints/ on-site visits	Year				
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Monkeys	423 (376)	513 (357)	527 (342)	399 (238)	409 (217)
Wild pigs	396 (182)	510 (255)	643 (87)	787 (265)	1008 (208)
Feral pigeons*	328	375	404	469	540

() denotes the number of on-site visits recorded. For arrangements of operation concerned, please refer to the response in 2(b) and (c) below.

*Upon receipt of complaints against feral pigeon nuisances, AFCD will deploy staff to the scene for follow-up actions. Hong Kong has no legislation which regulates pigeon feeding. If any feral pigeon feeding activity is found, AFCD staff will advise and educate the feeders not to do so. If it is within the precincts of a housing estate, publicity materials will be provided to the housing estates management for distribution and display.

The number of prosecutions against illegal feeding of wild animals in feeding ban areas over the past 5 years is as follows:

Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of prosecutions	62	75	72	40	32
^ Number of successful prosecutions	65	52	52	57	20
Highest and lowest fine of successful prosecutions (\$)	0 - 1,000	0 - 1,200	300 - 1,500	500 - 1,500	1000

^ Some of the prosecutions instituted in the financial year might have to be processed in the next financial year.

(d) with reference to the population control programmes for animals in Table 2 of paragraph 1.9, of the reasons why the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") had imposed fertility control on stray animals by using contraceptive methods for some and sterilization for others; as well as AFCD's considerations for different types of animals?

Monkeys and wild pigs

To control the number of monkeys and wild pigs and abate the nuisances they created in the long run, AFCD will control their breeding through contraceptive treatments/sterilisation. The natural behaviour and size of the species as well as the effectiveness of the existing technologies and their technical requirements would be considered in the selection of appropriate birth measures. As the effect of the trial contraceptive vaccine applied on monkeys was far from satisfactory, birth control will be conducted by performing endoscopic tubectomy or endoscopic vasectomy. Since wild pigs are large in size, there will be difficulties in conducting endoscopic surgery in the wild, AFCD is studying the effectiveness of injectable contraceptive vaccines for birth control purpose.

Stray cattle

The Government has adopted a multi-pronged approach for managing stray cattle and has been making continuous efforts to explore enhanced measures that will help minimise the nuisances caused by stray cattle while safeguarding their welfare. One of the major measures is the "Capture-Sterilisation-Relocation" programme in which stray cattle will be captured by AFCD staff to allow veterinary surgeons to perform surgical sterilisation. The cattle will be relocated to remote country park areas in the same district to resume their livelihood in the wild so that their nuisances to the public would be minimised. Meanwhile, AFCD is currently conducting a trial programme on injectable contraceptive vaccine (GonaCon™) for female cattle, with a view to decreasing the reproductive rate of cattle dwelling in remote rural areas in a more effective manner. The findings of the first phase of the trial show that the vaccine has effectively rendered infertility to 70% of the cattle, but the success rate in sterilising buffaloes is relatively low. For the time being, we will keep monitoring and assessing the long-term effectiveness of the contraceptive vaccine on cattle and buffaloes in the wild. The findings are expected to be available by the end of 2020.

Stray cats and dogs

Surgical sterilisation on cats and dogs is the most effective way, while contraceptive drugs or vaccines on cats and dogs are found relatively less effective.

Part 2: Control of Wild Animal Nuisances

Need to ensure that on-site visits are conducted where necessary and need to improve timeliness in responding to complaints

2) According to paragraphs 2.4 to 2.12, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) of the staff establishment for carrying out the work mentioned in paragraph 2.4;

30 staff from the Wetland and Fauna Conservation Division of AFCDC are responsible for the control of wild animals (including rescuing injured wild animals and handling wild animal nuisances), enforcement of the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance and conservation in connection with wetlands such as Mai Po.

(b) of the details of the services to be provided by AFCDC officers and the scope of work they will carry out when they conduct on-site visits or take actions in respect of the cases mentioned in paragraph 2.4,

Upon receipt of reports on injured or trapped wild animals, AFCDC will deploy staff to conduct on-site inspections and rescues. Upon receipt of reports of wild animal causing nuisances to the public, AFCDC will conduct on-site visits to investigate the cause and situation of the wild animal sighting, recommend preventive measures to the persons affected and take appropriate management actions as and when necessary, e.g. arranging patrols in the relevant sites and chase away or capture the wild animals causing nuisances immediately, etc.

(c) whether AFCDC has assessed the reasons for not conducting any on-site visits as mentioned in paragraph 2.6; of the form of follow-up work carried out by AFCDC if it has not conducted any on-site visits; and

AFCDC will decide whether to deploy staff to the scene in light of the information collected from the complainants, including the species and number of wild animals as well as the situation on the scene (including whether the wild animals have already left the scene). In cases where the wild animals involved do not pose any threat to life and property and they are in good health condition, AFCDC will suggest the complainants to allow the animals to leave at will. As for cases involving only the sighting of wild animals with no nuisance caused, or repeated complaints, AFCDC will approach the complainants to look into the situation and offer appropriate advice.

(d) regarding Case 1 in paragraph 2.6, whether AFCD can explain in detail how it can closely monitor the situation of wild pig occurrence in the area without conducting any on-site visits; and whether the wild pig issues at the Waterfront Park of Cyberport have been addressed?

For Case 1, AFCD failed to obtain further information from the complainant for on-site investigation as there was no contact number. In response to the previous complaints about wild pig nuisances around Cyberport and with the consent of the management company, AFCD has installed an infra-red camera at the area to monitor the occurrence of wild pigs on a long-term basis. AFCD confirmed the time of their occurrence by making use of the data of the infra-red camera and the information provided by other complainants for investigations. With the consent of the management company of Cyberport, cage trap was planned to be installed in early 2019. However, the wild pig had changed its pattern of occurrence before the operation and ceased to appear persistently around Cyberport. AFCD still maintains communication with the management company and monitors the occurrence of wild pigs around Cyberport by using the data of the infra-red camera and will take appropriate actions when necessary.

Need to follow guidelines on sterilisation of nuisance monkeys

- 3) Regarding the matters relating to the sterilization of nuisance monkeys in paragraphs 2.14 and 2.16, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) of the staff establishment for carrying out the relevant work;

In order to control the number of monkeys in the long term, since 2007, AFCD has arranged contraceptive treatment and sterilisation for monkeys in Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks and monitored the changes in monkey populations every year. In each operation, ten staff of the AFCD's contractor would be deployed to arrange capture and sterilisation and two AFCD staff would also be involved.

(b) regarding paragraph 2.15, of the reasons why AFCD had not indicated in its records the reasons for not sterilizing the 29 monkeys captured; and

Monkeys in Hong Kong generally get pregnant and procreate between April and August every year. In general, the captured monkeys would only be sterilised during the scheduled surgery period from September to March of the following year in order not to affect pregnant monkeys.

Monkeys causing persistent nuisances in residential areas will be captured and temporarily kept in AFCD's Animal Management Centres (AMCs) and to be sterilised as scheduled. If the veterinary surgeon team of the contractor is not available for performing the surgery for the captured monkeys in the short term, AFCD will release the monkeys to avoid keeping them away from the

natural environment for a prolonged period so as to safeguard animal welfare. This is the reason why the 29 monkeys captured were not sterilised as mentioned in paragraph 2.15.

(c) according to paragraph 2.16, as the 29 monkeys released without sterilization were captured outside the scheduled surgery period, no veterinarians from the contractor were available for conducting sterilization for them, of the reasons why AFCD had scheduled surgeries only from September to March of the following year; whether such a situation is caused by resource constraints; if so, whether AFCD will consider increasing its resources, so as to lengthen the surgery period for sterilization?

Please see the response to Question 3(b) above.

Population control programmes for wild animals and the need to review sterilisation targets for the monkey contraceptive programme

4) According to paragraphs 2.21 to 2.26, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) whether the sterilization target of AFCD can be construed as ranging from stipulating a "specified minimum number of monkeys to be sterilized" to "getting about 80% of the monkey population sterilized for each troop";

AFCD's monkey contraceptive programme mainly aims at "getting about 80% of the monkey population sterilised for each troop" and the main purpose of specifying "the minimum number of monkeys to be sterilised" in the service contract is to enable the contractor to assess and allocate the resources required when considering whether to undertake the monkey contraceptive programme and before the commencement of the programme.

(b) if monkeys captured do not belong to the identified troops, how they will be handled or assessed;

Before each capture and sterilisation operation, the contractor will first conduct a population survey of monkey troops. Therefore, monkeys from the non-target troops will not be captured.

(c) of the reasons for not specifying in the contracts that "the contractor would refrain from sterilizing monkeys for troops which had about 80% of the population sterilized"; and

To prepare for different scenarios, AFCD considers that it is not appropriate to specify the exact number of monkeys to be sterilised in the service contract. However, AFCD will communicate with the contractor before the contract commences. In order to prevent the monkey contraceptive programme from lowering the number of monkeys for each troop too much, before every operation, the contractor would conduct a monkey population survey and check the past sterilisation records of the target troops to ensure

that the number of monkeys sterilised for each troop will not exceed 80% of their total population.

(d) as residents currently living in the vicinity of rural areas often complain about nuisances caused by wild monkeys entering their homes, whether AFCD knew the numbers of such complaints from various districts in the territory in the past five years; and whether AFCD has regularly assessed the impacts of wild monkeys on society and reviewed the relevant control measures?

Over the past 5 years, the number of monkey nuisance reports received by AFCD is tabulated as follows:

Year	Kowloon	New Territories	Total
2014-15	70	353	423
2015-16	147	366	513
2016-17	126	401	527
2017-18	84	315	399
2018-19	89	320	409

Note: There were no reports on monkey sighting or nuisance on Hong Kong Island.

AFCD regularly reviews the nuisances caused by monkeys and deploys a task force to step up patrol in areas frequented by monkeys, especially in Sha Tin and Wong Tai Sin Districts. In recent years, AFCD has extended the scope of population survey to residential areas in the vicinity of country parks frequented by monkeys, to cover a small number of solitary monkeys causing nuisances to the residential areas in search for food. This is the reason why the total number of monkeys in the survey has slightly increased in recent years. Nevertheless, the population of major monkey troops in the core areas of Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks remains stable. AFCD will also review the control measures regularly. To further reduce nuisances caused by monkeys in urban areas, AFCD has included the solitary monkeys in the contraceptive programme since 2018.

Need to address difficulties in searching for and capturing monkeys

- 5) According to paragraphs 2.27 to 2.29, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) given that according to paragraph 2.27, while the population of monkeys and the number of monkey troops are increasing, the "specified minimum number of monkeys to be sterilized" in Table 5 has shown a downward trend, of the justifications for AFCD to set the relevant targets; how it has obtained the figures on the population of monkeys and the number of monkey troops in paragraph 2.27; and whether it has studied if the existing method for obtaining the relevant figures is accurate; and

The monkey contraceptive programme is operated on an adaptive basis in which the targets can be adjusted as and when necessary, with a view to tackling monkey nuisances in the long run. Through the past efforts of AFCD and the contractor, under the contraceptive programme, the total number of monkeys in the core areas of Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks maintains at about 1 800. The birth rate of monkey population has also decreased from 60% in 2009 to about 35% in recent years. Since 2017, AFCD has extended the scope of population survey to residential areas in the vicinity of country parks frequented by monkeys, in order to cover a small number of solitary monkeys causing nuisances to the residential areas in search for food. This is the reason why the total population of monkeys and the number of monkey troops in the survey have slightly increased in recent years. With the increase in the accumulated number of sterilised monkeys among the core monkey troops in the trapping sites, the number of monkeys suitable for sterilisation has thus decreased. Thus, there is a need to reduce the number of monkeys to be sterilised as specified in the contracts.

(b) regarding the situation mentioned in paragraphs 2.28 and 2.29, how AFCD will enhance its monkey trapping strategy at present?

The population of major monkey troops in the core areas of Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks remains stable. To further reduce nuisances caused by monkeys in urban areas, since 2018, AFCD has extended the scope of contraceptive programme to cover the monkey population causing nuisances to the residential areas in the vicinity of country parks, set trap cages in new sites, and improved the catching strategies by using real-time monitoring system.

Need for the “wild pig capture and contraception/ relocation programme” (CCRP) to cover more nuisance blackspots

6) According to paragraphs 2.32 to 2.36, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) of the criteria for determining the selected sites for carrying out the 51 operations under CCRP in paragraph 2.32; and the relevant details of such criteria;

In selecting sites for conducting CCRP operations, AFCD will look at various factors, including the size and structure of wild pig populations causing nuisances, degree of nuisances, food attraction and the suitability of terrains for conducting capture operations.

(b) of the effectiveness of the 51 operations mentioned in paragraph 2.32; and the respective numbers of wild pigs that were successfully captured, administered with contraceptive/sterilization treatment and relocated in the aforesaid 51 operations;

<p>During the period from October 2017 to 31 May 2019, AFCD arranged 51 operations and captured 183 wild pigs, among which 64 wild pigs were administered with the contraceptive vaccine, 22 were surgically sterilised and 138 were relocated to remote countryside.</p>
<p>(c) whether AFCD will regularly update the information on the nuisance blackspots for wild pigs in paragraph 2.33 (for example, whether it will review the data in each of the years mentioned in paragraph 2.33(a)); and</p>
<p>Apart from drawing up a list of nuisance blackspots according to the existing criteria, AFCD will regularly examine and update the situation of these blackspots as well as annually review the data of the past two years to formulate improvement measures to tackle the issues.</p>
<p>(d) of the effective measures currently adopted by the Administration to improve the situation of the nuisance blackspots for wild pigs?</p>
<p>AFCD will regularly examine and update the situation of these nuisance blackspots to formulate effective measures to tackle the issues, for example, arranging capture operations, setting up cage traps, arranging joint enforcement actions with relevant departments against feeders and strengthening public education to remind the public not to feed wild pigs. To reduce the nuisances caused by wild animals such as wild pigs foraging food from outdoor refuse, AFCD, FEHD and EPD jointly commissioned a study to improve the existing designs of refuse bins to prevent raids by wild pigs or monkeys. At the first phase of trial, the wildlife-resistant bins covered more than 40 trial locations across eight districts.</p>

Need to expedite evaluation of the contraceptive vaccine used

7) According to paragraphs 2.37 to 2.39, will the Administration inform this Committee:

<p>(a) when AFCD has started to track the wild pigs that have received contraceptive treatment; and among the aforesaid wild pigs, of the number of those which can still be tracked;</p>
<p>To monitor the movement of the released or relocated wild pigs, wild pigs of suitable size and having received contraceptive treatment, have been installed with Global Positioning System collars since August 2018. However, most of the collars slipped off within two months. To keep the collar in place, a waist strap has been added to secure the collar of a wild pig on a trial basis in November 2019. The wild pig is still wearing the transmitter and AFCD will closely monitor the effectiveness of this measure.</p>
<p>(b) given that it is pointed out in paragraphs 2.38 and 2.39 that the effectiveness of the vaccines used under CCRP cannot be evaluated as the contractor has not obtained enough samples, of the person(s) who had set the</p>

relevant targets; whether AFCD had studied if the problems mentioned in paragraph 2.38(a) and (b) are insoluble;
According to a research led by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of the United Kingdom (DEFRA), GonaCon™ has been found to be effective for at least four to six years on captive wild pigs. As wild pigs, in general, would not live for more than 10 years, GonaCon™ should be effective in controlling the fertility of wild pigs. AFCD is co-operating with the Department of Agriculture of the United States (USDA) and DEFRA to conduct field trials of GonaCon™ on wild pigs in Hong Kong to assess the long-term effectiveness of the vaccine. Blood samples from the wild pigs (including 10 samples from recaptured individuals) collected during the research period were sent to UK for analysis in October 2019.
(c) according to current estimation, when the aforesaid evaluation is expected to be completed; if the evaluation cannot be completed within the target time frame, how the contract will be handled; and
It is expected that preliminary results of the above research project will be available in early 2020.
(d) of the details of the contracts, relevant schemes and the relevant expenditures?
Under the above research project, USDA and DEFRA will be responsible for providing vaccines and assessing the vaccine effectiveness respectively. The project involves about \$0.86 million in total.

Need to expedite conducting population surveys of wild pigs

- 8) According to paragraphs 2.41 to 2.44, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) whether AFCD has assessed if the measures for controlling the wild pig population are unscientific and inadequate, given that they were implemented under the situation where AFCD did not know the number of wild pigs; and how AFCD will set targets under CCRP and evaluate the effectiveness of CCRP when it does not have the number of wild pigs; and
To tackle the wild pig issues, the main objective is to reduce the nuisance caused by wild pigs appearing near urban or residential areas. Wild pigs foraging in the nature and causing no nuisances to the public are not among the targets to be managed. Therefore the availability of statistics on the territory-wide population size of wild pigs in Hong Kong does not have direct bearing on how wild pig nuisances are managed. To assess the effectiveness of the pilot programme, AFCD will monitor the degree of nuisance at the trial sites for signs of alleviation, the effectiveness of the contraceptive vaccine and tendency of relocated individuals to return to urban areas. The preliminary findings show that there is instant alleviation of nuisance in most trial sites.

(b) of the details and progress of the study conducted on the technology for estimating the wild pig population accurately and for carrying out population surveys on wild pigs?

The study on wild pig population mainly aims at estimating the total population of wild pigs in Hong Kong by using infra-red cameras to collect time lapse data for statistical analysis. At present, data collection work in trial sites has been completed and data analysis is in progress. If the outcomes are satisfactory, AFCD will engage contractors to extend the scope of the study to cover the territory to obtain more accurate statistics.

9) What is the overall division of responsibilities and organization within the Administration in relation to the control of wild monkeys and wild pigs? How many parts of such work will be outsourced to contractors?

The Environment Bureau is responsible for formulating wildlife conservation policies, while AFCD is responsible for giving effect to these policies, including handling nuisances caused by wild animals. To control the number of wild monkeys and pigs in the long run and abate the nuisances they caused to the public, capture, contraception and relocation of wild animals will be conducted by AFCD's outsourced contractors. The work above does not cover the control of stray animals and zoonotic diseases under the policy area of the Food and Health Bureau.

Need to take into account wild pig nuisances in imposing feeding bans

10) As it is pointed out in paragraph 2.53 that AFCD agrees to keep in view the need to extend Feeding Ban Area to cover nuisance blackspots for wild pigs, when will AFCD carry out the aforesaid review and when the review is expected to be completed?

AFCD has established an advisory group comprising experts from various fields to advise on the management of wild pigs, including reviewing the feasibility of extending feeding ban areas. It is expected that preliminary results will be available by the end of 2020.

Part 3: Control of Stray Animal Nuisances

Need to improve guidelines on handling stray dogs and cats

11) Regarding paragraphs 3.12 to 3.15, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) given that stray dogs and cats not reclaimed within 96 hours or after four days and considered not fit for rehoming (i.e. due to failing either health or temperament assessment) would be euthanized, of the justifications for setting this threshold;

According to the Rabies Ordinance (Cap. 421), where an animal has been seized and detained under section 7 and no person has within 96 hours after such seizure notified the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (DAFC), an authorised officer or a police officer that he is the keeper of the animal, it shall be presumed until the contrary is proved, that the animal was abandoned. DAFC may dispose of the subject animal in a way as he considers appropriate, including arranging for rehoming or euthanasia. Nevertheless, for dogs with microchip implanted, AMCs will try to locate their owners based on the information on the microchips. In general, they will stay in the AMCs temporarily for 10 to 20 days. If owners have lost their animals, 96 hours is a reasonable period of time for them to report their loss.

Allowing all animals to stay longer in AMCs would significantly reduce the space for keeping other animals, including those in good health, having a gentle temperament and suitable for adoption. These animals could otherwise be able to stay in the AMCs for a longer period of time to wait for adoption. Moreover, some of the animals received by AMCs are not fit for rehoming due to various reasons, including the risk of carrying zoonotic diseases, health or temperamental reasons.

(b) of the staff establishment to be stationed in Animal Management Centres to observe stray dogs and cats, and the ratio of the average number of staff members deployed to the number of stray dogs and cats observed; and

Currently, there are about 50 staff in AFCD's four AMCs who are responsible for observing and taking care of the animals. In 2018, AFCD received 2 943 cats and dogs through different channels. Since the number of cats and dogs stay in AMCs varies each day and the length of their stay also varies, therefore, the actual number of cats and dogs attended by each staff member cannot be accurately calculated.

(c) the reasons for not documenting euthanizing two dogs and a cat during the four-day detention period?

The 47 cats and dogs mentioned in the Audit Report were euthanised due to their low chance of survival because of injury or illness, or some had a temperament that was not suitable for rehoming as assessed by veterinary officers in accordance with AFCD's guidelines. However, the staff concerned forgot to record the reasons for euthanasia of three of these animals in the computer system, resulting in incomplete information. AFCD has already reminded relevant staff that the reasons for euthanising animals must be properly recorded.

Need to enhance monitoring of rehoming partners

12) Regarding paragraph 3.17, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) of AFCD's existing procedures for transferring stray dogs and cats to rehoming partners;

If the animals being abandoned or left unclaimed are assessed to have a gentle temperament and are in good health by veterinary officers of AFCD, AFCD will notify its rehoming partners, which will conduct further assessment on the animals in AMCs where necessary. If the animals are considered to be suitable for rehoming, the rehoming partners will submit the applications and collect the animals. Members of the public who wish to adopt animals may apply for rehoming in accordance with the guidelines of the rehoming partners.

(b) of the prerequisites and procedures for applying to become a rehoming partner;

The applicant organisation must be registered under the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622) or the Societies Ordinance (Cap. 151). The organisation must also be a charitable organisation registered under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap.112). During the process, if the organisation is charging a rehoming or adoption fee in return for transferring ownership of the animal, it must apply for an exemption from holding an Animal Trader Licence under section 5A of the Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Trading and Breeding) Regulations (Cap. 139B). In addition, the applicant organisation also has to submit further information, including the background, structure, activities and financial status of the organisation, whether it has a membership scheme for adopters, a mechanism in place for assessing potential adopters as well as follow-up and record-keeping system. If the applicant organisation has premises for keeping animal, relevant information must also be submitted to AFCD for approval.

(c) as the Director of Audit's Report had pointed out that of the 16 animal welfare organizations ("AWOs"), seven had become rehoming partners for more than 10 years, and that there was a risk that some rehoming partners had not been visited by AFCD for a considerable period of time, of the details and the meaning of "there was a risk that some rehoming partners had not been visited for a considerable period of time"; of AFCD's guidelines on and manpower for visiting rehoming partners; and

In general, AFCD will visit the relevant facilities of the animal welfare organisations (AWOs) while assessing their applications, and will only visit them where necessary. AFCD has not drawn up guidelines on visiting rehoming partners. AFCD will draw up visiting guidelines and visit the facilities of rehoming partners regularly in order to ensure proper running of the facilities.

(d) of the relevant requirements for AWOs in submitting rehoming records, the purpose of so doing, whether a sample copy can be provided; if no records have been submitted, how AFCD will follow it up; why AFCD can tolerate non-submission of rehoming records?

AFCD currently maintains liaison with rehoming partners and regularly reminds them of the need to submit rehoming records in a timely manner. Through collecting rehoming records, AFCD obtains useful information to assess the rehoming capacities and frequencies of AWOs in order to timely review and enhance the programme. A copy of rehome record being used by AWOs is enclosed.

Need to ensure that sterilisation requirement of rehomed dogs and cats is followed

13) Regarding paragraphs 3.23 and 3.24, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) whether procedures have been formulated to ensure the sterilization of rehomed dogs and cats which have not been sterilized at AFCD-engaged veterinary clinics; and

At present, AFCD requires its rehoming partners to perform sterilisation for animals (cats, dogs and rabbits) referred by AFCD. Due to various factors, the rehomed animals might not be suitable to undergo sterilisation immediately. Thus, the rehoming partners will decide the most suitable time to perform sterilisation for them based on the condition of the animals concerned, thus the animals may be sterilised after they have been rehomed. AFCD will also follow up with the rehoming partners regularly on whether the rehomed animals have undergone sterilisation.

(b) whether it has assessed the feasibility of making it a mandatory requirement that dogs and cats must be sterilized at AFCD-engaged veterinary clinics before being rehomed?

Please see the response to Question 13(a) above.

Need to keep in view implementing of TNR trial programme

14) Regarding paragraphs 3.26 to 3.30, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) whether AFCD will adjust the trial programme concerned at present; of the details of the measures in place to deliver the expected results of the programme; and

Since the findings of the “Trap-Neuter-Return” Trial Programme for Stray Dogs show that average lifespan of stray dogs may be lengthened under regular feeding and care given by carers, AFCD will make reference to the findings to determine the duration of the programme if there is any future attempt for AWOs to run the programme at specific locations.

(b) of the details and amounts of funds allocated to the two AWOs taking part in the programme; whether any manpower requirement for those AWOs are specified; if completion of the programme within the stipulated timeframe is not possible, whether AFCD will provide supplementary funding to the AWOs concerned, and how it will handle such situation?

The distribution of labour and resource allocation of the said programme is divided into two parts: the programme coordinators (i.e. AWOs) are responsible for feeding, capturing and performing sterilisation for dogs while AFCD is responsible for monitoring and analysing the effectiveness of the trial programme, providing technical support when necessary, and deploying staff to handle complaints in relation to the programme. AFCD and the programme coordinators will bear the respective manpower resources and relevant expenses in relation to the programme. AFCD has not specified any manpower requirement for the programme coordinators.

Part 4: Publicity, Prosecution and Other Administrative Issues

Need to ensure display of banners at blackspots and congregation spots

15) Regarding paragraphs 4.9 to 4.13, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) apart from putting up banners at animal nuisance blackspots and animal congregation spots, what initiatives will AFCD take to improve the blackspots for and congregation spots of monkeys, wild pigs and feral pigeons;

Wild animals appear and congregate when acquiring food from human feeding or food remains from human. AFCD strives to strengthen public education, including displaying banners at nuisance blackspots and congregation spots, enhancing public knowledge of wild animals and promoting the prevention of feeding wild animals. From 2018 onwards, AFCD has commissioned OPCFHK to offer educational activities and eco-tours in the feeding ban areas (including Sha Tin, Wong Tai Sin and Tsuen Wan Districts) during weekends, with a view to enhancing public knowledge and spreading the message of no feeding of wild animals. Moreover, from 2019 onwards, school talks have been provided to districts frequented by wild animals (including Sha Tin, Southern, Yau Tsim Mong and Tsuen Wan Districts) to further disseminate message on prevention of wildlife nuisances and stop feeding wild animals.

AFCD has just conducted a series of publicity and education programmes, including promotion on TV, radio, public transportation, thematic websites as well as organisation of fun day, roving exhibitions, public lectures and visits, to publicise the negative impacts of feeding wild animals. AFCD has also launched the TV Announcements in the Public Interest together with a series of micro-movies titled “Don’t Feed Wild Animals and Feral Pigeons” to inform the public about the negative consequences of feeding wild pigs, monkeys and feral pigeons, etc.

(b) apart from the blackspots and congregation spots, whether AFCD has put up relevant banners in other places; and

Where appropriate (e.g. sufficient space is available), banners in relation to monkeys, wild pigs and feral pigeons will be displayed at the feeding and congregation blackspots.

(c) why such banners were not put up at all animal nuisance blackspots and animal congregation spots in the past?

Please see the response to Question 15(b) above.

Need for timely prosecution action

16) Regarding the two cases referred to in paragraph 4.20, whether AFCD has reviewed the respective reasons why the 31 prosecution cases were withdrawn from 2014-2015 to 2018-2019; regarding the two cases for which prosecutions were time-barred and hence AFCD had not instituted any prosecutions, whether human errors or manpower deployment issues were involved?

From 2014-15 to 2018-19, 31 cases were dropped by AFCD due to insufficient evidence. Two cases were time-barred and no prosecution had been instituted due to the delay in processing the cases. AFCD will learn from the incidents and carefully review the workflow and monitoring procedures to improve the existing enforcement and prosecution procedures.

Need to enhance practices on surveillance of African Swine Fever

17) Regarding the pilot programme for further enhancing the surveillance of African Swine Fever ("ASF") mentioned in paragraph 4.30, will the Administration inform this Committee:

(a) of the coverage of the pilot programme; whether AFCD will, in implementing such programme officially, consider implementing the programme throughout Hong Kong; if not, of the reasons for that; and

The pilot programme to strengthen the surveillance of African swine fever on wild pigs currently mainly covered areas in the vicinity of pig farms (including the north of Shang Shui and east of Lam Tsuen Country Park). AFCD, after reviewing the pilot programme and considering the factors concerned (e.g. the number of wild pig carcasses collected), will adjust the programme, which will include extending the scope of surveillance to cover the whole New Territories by phases.

(b) of the numbers of wild pig deaths that were found in Hong Kong each month since ASF was first found in August 2018 on the Mainland; of the locations where such deaths were found?

The number of wild pig carcasses collected by FEHD from August 2018 to November 2019 by district is set out as follows:

Month	Hong Kong Island and Outlying Islands	Kowloon	New Territories
August 2018	9	3	3
September 2018	10	1	9
October 2018	7	4	8
November 2018	15	0	13
December 2018	11	4	19

January 2019	10	1	21
February 2019	11	1	8
March 2019	13	1	5
April 2019	7	0	8
May 2019	8	1	7
June 2019	7	0	8
July 2019	19	1	21
August 2019	22	1	20
September 2019	18	4	34
October 2019	14	2	20
November 2019	13	1	19
Total :	194	25	223

(II) For the Environment Bureau

Need to expedite conducting population surveys of wild pigs

18) What is the overall division of responsibilities and organization within the Administration in relation to the control of wild monkeys and wild pigs? How many parts of such work will be outsourced to contractors?

Please see the response to Question 9 above.
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Rehome record for AWO

Ref No.	AFCD Ref.		Animal Particulars						Organization Ref.		
	Date of Application	Date of rehome to Organization	Species	Breed	Age	Sex	AVID no.	Date of rehome to adoptor/Outcome	Adoptor	Desex status	