

**For discussion
on 8 February 2021**

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

Management of stray cattle and handling nuisances of wild animals

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members of the Subcommittee on the measures adopted by the Government in managing stray cattle and handling nuisances of wild animals.

MEASURES ON MANAGEMENT OF STRAY CATTLE

2. Stray cattle in Hong Kong are primarily distributed in Lantau Island, Sai Kung/Ma On Shan, Northeast New Territories and Central New Territories. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) commissions territory-wide population surveys of stray cattle on a regular basis. According to outcome of the 2018 survey, there were approximately 980 brown cattle and 160 buffaloes in the territory.

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 even damage crops at times.

4. AFCD 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, whilst safeguarding their welfare. To facilitate the work on this front, AFCD set up a dedicated Cattle Management Team in 2011 to carry out a series of measures on the management of stray cattle.

Handling complaints on nuisances

5. From time to time, AFCD receives complaints related to nuisances caused by stray cattle in the community. These include impact of their excrement on environmental hygiene, obstruction to traffic or accidents, damage to flowers and crops, etc. Upon receipt of such complaints, AFCD officers will attend the scene to investigate. If the cattle is owned by individuals, AFCD officers will advise the owner or responsible person to keep the cattle under proper control. If the animals are not claimed or no owner can be identified, AFCD staff will arrange to relocate the cattle concerned to Country Park area, to prevent them from returning to the original spot and causing nuisance again.

6. Furthermore, AFCD has employed four ‘herdsmen’ since 2017, to station at different locations in South Lantau Island where reported cattle nuisances are frequent. If any cattle is causing obstruction to traffic or disturbing residents, herdsman will attend the scene and herd the cattle away. Relevant Lantau Rural Committees have commented employment of such ‘herdsmen’ has eased the problem of stray cattle nuisance to an extent.

Cattle population control

7. According to projections, if stray cattle are left to reproduce naturally in the wild unchecked, their population will double every 20 years, and hence population control is necessary. One of the key measures implemented by AFCD to control cattle population is the “Capture-Sterilisation-Relocation” (CSR). Under CSR, cattle are captured for inspection and assessment. Those in good health conditions will undergo surgical sterilisation and be ear-tagged for identification. Upon recovery from the surgical wound, the cattle will be relocated to the Country Park area near where they were captured, to reduce nuisances caused.

8. AFCD has been hiring a cattle veterinarian from Australia since 2018 to perform surgical sterilisation in the wild, to expedite its work on cattle sterilisation and enable sterilisation to be performed on cattle residing in remote rural areas. Over the past 3 years, AFCD sterilised on average around 120 brown cattle and buffaloes annually.

Treating injured and sick cattle

9. When reports are received on injured or sick cattle, AFCD officers will attempt to locate the animal concerned and depending on the condition of the cattle, officers will treat the animal on site or transport it to an Animal

Management Centre for treatment. In the past 3 years, AFCD handled on average around 200 cases of injured or sick cattle annually.

HANDLING WILD ANIMAL NUISANCE

10. To strengthen the handling of wild animal nuisance, AFCD completed comprehensive reviews for the management strategies for wild pigs and monkeys in early 2019 and the second half of 2020 respectively. AFCD now adopts multi-pronged approaches including capture operations, contraception and sterilisation, feeding ban, improvement of refuse collection facilities, etc. for more effective control of wild pig and monkey nuisance to residential areas.

Capture and sterilisation

11. AFCD has been commissioning the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong to sterilise monkeys in country parks by permanent endoscopic surgery since 2009. Over 1 700 monkeys were sterilised, since then the birth rate of monkeys in Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks has declined from about 60% in 2009 to 33% in recent years. In 2018, AFCD extended the sterilisation programme to monkey troops causing regular nuisance to residential areas and set up trapping cages in the nuisance sites in Wong Tai Sin, Sha Tin, Tsuen Wan and Sham Shui Po. The number of monkey nuisance cases has reduced from 527 cases in 2016-17 to 212 cases in 2020-21 (as at December).

12. For the management of wild pigs, AFCD launched the pilot Capture and Contraception/Relocation Programme (CCRP) in late 2017 and regularised the programme in 2019. AFCD will relocate wild pigs causing nuisance to remote countryside in order to provide immediate relief to the nuisance, as well as perform contraception or sterilisation on those causing nuisance or rescued where conditions permit. Since the introduction of the CCRP and up to December 2020, AFCD has caught a total of 688 wild pigs. Among them, 297 received contraceptive treatments or sterilisation; 518 were relocated to remote countryside farther away from residential areas¹.

¹ The sum of wild pigs that received contraceptive treatment/sterilisation and those relocated is higher than the total number of wild pigs captured because the same wild pig might have received contraceptive treatment/sterilisation and was then relocated.

Feeding ban on wild animals

13. Wild animals' reproductive rate is highly dependent on food availability. AFCD's investigation reveals that the increase in wild pig nuisance cases in recent years is largely due to intentional feeding and outdoor garbage. In this regard, AFCD has been working closely with relevant departments to eliminate the pull factors at black spots by removing food residues, improving the design of refuse collection facilities, strengthening the promotion of no-feeding of wild animals, etc. AFCD also arranges regular patrol at designated feeding ban areas² and will take prosecution actions against anyone who has contravened the feeding ban on wild animals subject to the availability of sufficient evidence. AFCD will also review the patrolling and enforcement arrangements at feeding ban areas in accordance with the actual situation, such as deployment of additional manpower to conduct enforcement and blitz operations at night and on public holidays from time to time, so as to strengthen our combat against illegal feeding of wild animals.

Wild pig-or monkey-resistant litter containers

14. AFCD has commissioned a consultancy study with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Environmental Protection Department to improve the design of refuse collection facilities with a view to reducing scavenging for food from outdoor garbage by wild animals. The contractor has developed three new designs of wild-pig-or-monkey-resistant litter containers which were tested at over 70 sites disturbed by wildlife nuisance throughout the territories. All field trials were completed in the third quarter of 2020. Study results suggested that these new designs can effectively reduce wildlife nuisance. The relevant department will deploy the newly-designed litter containers in more suitable sites according to the actual needs in order to minimise wild animal nuisance.

Publicity and education

15. AFCD has been educating the public on the importance of no-feeding of wild animals. AFCD has displayed banners in many feeding and nuisance blackspots and commissioned a contractor to organise educational activities and eco-tours at some feeding and nuisance blackspots so as to enhance public knowledge on wild animals and spread the message of

² Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks, part of Tai Mo Shan Country Park, Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve, a section of Tai Po Road along Caldecott Road and Piper's Hill section of Tai Po Road are specified places under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) at which the feeding of any wild animals are prohibited, i.e. the feeding ban areas. Any person feeding wild animals in the feeding ban area is liable to a maximum fine of \$10,000.

no-feeding of wild animals. AFCD has also extended the publicity and education activities to kindergartens, primary schools and communities in the vicinity of feeding blackspots, as well as organising over a hundred outdoor education exhibitions, school or online talks and a number of eco-tours on wild animals in country parks, etc. to educate the public of different age groups, particularly students, on the prevention of wild animal nuisance and no-feeding of wild animals. AFCD will also provide technical advice to Government departments and property management agents for reference on measures to reduce wild pig raids in public facilities and private properties. AFCD has advised farmers that if wild pigs are found foraging in farmland, they could erect sturdy fence to protect crops or install electric fence or infrared auto-trigger lightings to deter wild pigs.

ADVICE SOUGHT

16. Members are invited to note and comment on the contents of this paper.

**Food and Health Bureau
Environment Bureau
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