



立法會 CB(2) 1414/05-06(08)號文件
LC Paper No. CB(2) 1414/05-06(08)

香港觀鳥會
 The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society
 認可公共性質慈善機構 Approved Charitable Institution of Public Character
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Monday 13th March, 2006

The Hon Fred Li Wah Ming
 Chairman, Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
 Legislative Council Secretariat
 Legislative Council Building
 8 Jackson Road
 Central
 Hong Kong

Re: Government's approach to wild birds not based on scientific fact

Dear Mr Li

We are writing in relation to the upcoming LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene meeting to discuss the Administration's measures to combat Avian Influenza H5N1 (AI) on 14th March 2006.

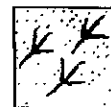
While we welcome the importance given to addressing infection within and from from the poultry trade, this paper makes no mention of the Administration's actions in respect of wild birds, including:

- The closure of Mai Po and the Wetland Park and the curtailment of bird watching activities in Kowloon Park and the advice by the Education and Manpower Bureau to schools not to participate in bird watching activities.
- The statement by York Chow that it is OK for the public to stone birds (which is illegal under Cap 169 and 170).

I have noted that bird watching activities in the public have been stopped. This has affected activities for students and also for senior citizens. The public has got the wrong message that outdoor activities are not safe and that wild birds are our enemies.



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Closure of Mai Po and curtailment of bird watching activities

On Tuesday 7th March on the RTHK Radio 3 programme "Backchat" I put the following facts to two of Hong Kong's leading experts on the disease – Professor Malik Pereis of Hong Kong University and Dr Lo Wing Lok

- None of the 93 victims world wide have contracted AI from wild birds
- There is no known case of human infection from contact with wild birds anywhere in the world
- Tens of thousands of live wild birds at Mai Po have been tested for AI by Professor Pereis and NONE have been found with H5N1.
- Bird watching does not bring people into direct physical contact with wild birds
- The risk of contracting Avian influenza from wild birds is extremely small

Having established that these facts were correct I asked what was the scientific justification for closing Mai Po and received the answer from these experts that there was no scientific justification.

Dr Lo commented further that Mai Po was closed by the Administration to "give the appearance that the Government was doing something". This is also the view held by many experts in the medical and ornithological field in Hong Kong. The implications of this action by the Administration are that:

- Mai Po has been closed needlessly.
- WWF has needlessly lost income for conservation in the Ramsar site due to the Administration's actions; and most importantly
- the Administration has whipped up fear and misunderstanding of wild birds and Avian Influenza, thus needlessly adding to the climate of fear and panic surrounding the disease.

Requested Action by the Panel

Bearing these points in mind we would like to request that the Panel ask the Administration:

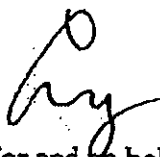
- What scientific criteria or information, if any were used in the decision to close Mai Po, the Wetland Park and other sites, and curtail bird watching activities in parks and by schools?

- What justification remains for the closure of these sites and curtailment of these activities?
- When, bearing mind the opinions of the abovementioned experts, will these decisions be reversed.
- Since it is illegal under Cap 169 and 170 to harm any animal or bird, how does it explain the recommendation by York Chow encouraging people to break the law by throwing stones at birds?
- Are there any experts on migratory birds advising the Administration?

We believe that the last question is particularly relevant. As nature conservation is a policy of the government, the view of experts on wildlife conservation ought be included in any action related to wild birds.

Thank you for your attention.

Kind regards,



For and on behalf of Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Limited

PP

(Mike Kilburn)

Vice Chairman