



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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Fax No.: 2136 3282

(Translation)

17 June 2013

Clerk to Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Mr Jove CHAN)
[Fax: 2185 7845]

Dear Mr Chan,

**Re: Inclusion of an Agenda Item to
Discuss Matters Relating to Stray Cattle**

Thank you for your letter of 7 June 2013, referring to us a letter on the captioned subject from Hon. WONG Kwok-hing to the Chairman of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene and requesting a reply from us by 17 June 2013. I am authorised to reply as follows.

The Cattle Administration Team (CAT) is a dedicated team set up under the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) to coordinate the long-term management of stray cattle in Hong Kong. Apart from handling complaints about stray cattle, members of the CAT visit various areas in the territory frequented by stray cattle on a regular basis.

The AFCD regularly exchanges views with animal welfare organisations and village representatives on the number of stray cattle and their activity areas. We understand that there are divergent views in the

community on how the issue of stray cattle should be tackled. Some residents have expressed serious concerns about the inconvenience and nuisance caused by stray cattle and urged the AFCD to deploy staff regularly to catch and relocate these cattle. On the other hand, we note that there are those who consider that the AFCD should adopt alternative methods to control the number of stray cattle.

The AFCD has formulated a long-term strategy and taken the following measures by phases to address the issue of stray cattle through a multi-pronged approach.

First of all, the AFCD conducted the first phase of a detailed survey last year on the number and distribution of stray cattle in the territory, through which important baseline information has been collected to help us better evaluate the effectiveness of various stray cattle management measures in future. According to the data available, there are at present about 1 230 stray cattle in the territory. The AFCD is embarking on the second phase of the survey, during which cattle will be fitted with collars bearing global positioning system (GPS) devices so as to accurately track their movements. This will help us keep track of information related to the routes used, distances travelled and areas inhabited.

Secondly, population control is one of the key measures being adopted by the AFCD to manage stray cattle. The AFCD has been collaborating with animal welfare organisations to neuter male animals. To further control the breeding rate of stray cattle, the AFCD has enhanced training for its veterinary staff members in recent years to equip them with a new technique to sterilise female cattle. The AFCD is also exploring the use of an injectable form of sterilisation which will enable the Department to neuter cattle even in remote parts of the territory, as well as saving the resources and time required for surgery.

The AFCD is working in collaboration with animal welfare organisations to herd cattle in various districts. Upon receipt of reports from members of the public, the staff concerned will proceed to the site and help herd cattle off the roads or away to a safe place. Besides, where feasible and appropriate, the AFCD will relocate captured stray cattle to rural areas or country parks where they may stay without causing any nuisance. However, from the AFCD's observation, some cattle tended to return to their original dwelling places or locations where they were caught after being relocated. To obtain more detailed information about their movements, the AFCD is in the process of fitting them with GPS collars so as to accurately monitor their movements. This will

facilitate our work in planning for relocation and allow us to explore other feasible measures (e.g. erecting fence or installing cattle grids¹) to prevent the cattle from returning to their original dwelling places.

With the concerted efforts of the AFCD, animal welfare organisations and the local communities concerned, a total of 156 stray cattle have been neutered since the establishment of the CAT in late 2011. Besides, the number of complaints about nuisance caused by stray cattle received by the AFCD decreased from 245 in 2011 to 149 in 2012. Under the said multi-pronged strategy, it is believed that the issue of stray cattle could be properly addressed by controlling the number of stray cattle gradually and effectively.

To keep track of developments, the AFCD will continue to conduct surveys on the number and distribution of stray cattle in various districts across the territory. To assess and enhance the efficacy of the above long-term strategy, the AFCD will also continue to liaise with the relevant local communities, animal organisations, district councils and rural committees, and listen to the views of various parties.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]

(Vinci CHAN)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c.: Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Attn.: Dr Thomas SIT)
[Fax: 2375 3563]

¹ Cattle grids are a type of barrier commonly used in other countries which are laid into the road surface to stop cattle from passing a point in the road, whilst still allowing vehicles to cross.