

(Translation)

22 September 2014

Clerk to LegCo Panel on  
Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Attn.: Ms Alice LEUNG)  
(Fax: 2509 9055)

Dear Ms Leung,

**LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene  
Follow-up to Meeting on 17 January 2014**

At the meeting of the Panel on 17 January 2014, Members enquired about the scientific basis and the methodology of H7 avian influenza (AI) serological test as well as the prosecution figures for illegal import of uncooked poultry meat. This Bureau was requested to provide supplementary information after the meeting. Our response to the relevant matters is as follows.

**H7 AI Serological Test**

Since the reporting of the first human case of H7N9 AI in the Mainland in March 2013, we have been maintaining close liaison with the relevant Mainland authorities to assess the development of the outbreak and discuss the response measures required to ensure the safety of live poultry and poultry products supplied to Hong Kong and to safeguard public health. In addition to increasing the sampling size and the frequency of inspections in the live poultry supply chain, the inspection and quarantine departments in both places have, starting

from April 2013, introduced H7 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test to local and imported live poultry.

Building on these measures, we have launched H7 AI serological test since 24 January 2014 in order to further strengthen the capability in background monitoring and in providing alerts at local chicken farms and Mainland registered farms. The serological test serves to monitor if any poultry or farm have been infected with H7 AI in the past, thus further strengthening the capability in background surveillance and in providing alerts at the farm level. While a positive result in serological test means that the live poultry have been infected in the past, it does not mean the poultry concerned are carrying AI virus at the time when being tested. The PCR testing for H7 AI currently in place is the main tool adopted to confirm if individual birds are carrying AI virus.

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will, on a farm basis, take 20 blood samples from one consignment of live poultry imported from an individual farm at an interval of 14 days at the Man Kam To Animal Inspection Station. The samples will then be passed to the Veterinary Laboratory of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) for H7 AI serological test by using haemagglutination inhibition tests. In parallel, the relevant Mainland inspection and quarantine authorities will also conduct H7 AI serological test, with the same method and frequency, on live poultry at Mainland registered farms before their delivery to Hong Kong. If live poultry from the Mainland are tested positive by Hong Kong, CFS will take additional samples from 120 live poultry in the same consignment for PCR testing for confirmation if the consignment has been infected with AI. A negative result in the PCR testing with the said sampling size would suggest, in the context of AI epidemiological study, that it is unlikely of this population of chickens to be carrying H7 AI virus.

### **Prosecution Figures for Illegal Import of Uncooked Poultry Meat**

FEHD and AFCD have been liaising and co-operating closely with the Customs and Excise Department to prevent the illegal import of live poultry or uncooked poultry meat into Hong Kong by travellers, including deployment of detector dogs to check travellers' baggage at the boundary control points. The Government has also enhanced publicity and education programmes to remind members of the public not to bring live poultry or uncooked poultry meat into Hong Kong illegally. In 2013 and 2014 (up to August), there were a total of 152 and 62 prosecutions cases against illegal import of uncooked poultry meat respectively.

Yours sincerely,

( Alison LO )  
for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c.:

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