

(Translation)

12 May 2014

Clerk to Panel  
(Attn.: Ms Alice LEUNG)  
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene  
Legislative Council  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Fax No.: 2509 9055)

Dear Ms LEUNG,

**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene  
Follow-up to Meeting on 11 March 2014**

At the Panel meeting on 11 March 2014, Members enquired about whether the import of day-old chicks from the Mainland had been suspended during the 21-day suspension of live poultry trading between 28 January and 18 February 2014, and its impact on the supply of live chickens from local farms after the trading of live poultry resumed. This Bureau is requested to provide a response. Our reply is set out below.

After a number of samples from a batch of imported live chickens were confirmed positive for H7 avian influenza (AI) by the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test on 27 January 2014, the Government immediately adopted a series of measures to prevent the spread of AI. The Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (DAFC) declared the Cheung Sha Wan Temporary Wholesale Poultry Market (the wholesale poultry market) as an infected place. Some 22 604 birds were slaughtered on 28 January 2014 by order of DAFC under the Public Health (Animals and Birds) Regulations (Cap. 139A). The wholesale poultry

market was closed for 21 days for thorough cleansing and disinfection, during which time trading of live poultry in Hong Kong was suspended. Officers of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) also inspected all local chicken farms and collected additional samples for testing to ensure that local farms were not affected by H7 AI. The wholesale poultry market resumed operation on 19 February 2014 after the 21-day closure.

At present, 60% of local live chickens are produced with day-old chicks bred at local farms while the remaining 40% come from those imported from the Mainland. During the aforesaid 21-day suspension of live poultry trading, import of live poultry, including day-old chicks, from the Mainland was suspended. According to information gathered by AFCD, during the said period, local farms had continued to hatch day-old chicks so as to ensure their supply of live chickens after resumption of live poultry trading. By reference to the number and age profile of live chickens at local farms, the supply of local live chickens has not been affected by the suspension in the importation of day-old chicks from the Mainland. As a significant number of live chickens had been left over in local farms during the suspension period, the average daily supply of local live chickens amounted to around 17 200 at the initial stage immediately following the resumption of live poultry trading (i.e. from 19 February to end March 2014), which is higher than the average daily supply of about 10 600 for the year of 2013 as a whole. With a gradual reduction in the size of the remaining stock of live chickens at local farms, the supply of local live chickens in the month of April dropped to an average of some 9 300 per day. The average daily supply of local live chickens has since early May rebounded to around 10 100. Based on the information that we have about the number and age profile of live chickens at local farms, the average daily supply of live chickens is expected to stabilise at the level of about 11 000 in the coming six to eight weeks.

The Government is pressing ahead with the setting up of a check-point for local live chickens at the Government farm in Ta Kwu Ling. Upon resumption of import of live poultry from the Mainland, we would follow the existing practice of allowing the delivery of imported live poultry to the wholesale poultry market while testing results are pending. In the event of an AI incident leading to the closure of the wholesale poultry market, local poultry could be delivered to the retail outlets via the check-point in Ta Kwu Ling during the closure period. This will allow the continued supply of local live poultry to the market. According to the current assessment of the responsible works department, the facilities at the Ta Kwu Ling check-point could be ready for use in late June. By then, the import of live poultry from the Mainland will be resumed.

The concerned Government departments will closely monitor the supply of live chickens to ensure the continued supply of live poultry in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,

(Alison LO)  
for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c.:

Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation  
(Attn.: Dr. Thomas SIT)

Fax: 2311 3731

Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene  
(Attn.: Dr. SY LEE)

Fax: 2521 9527