

(Translation)

1 April 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

Dear Ms LEUNG,

**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene  
Issues relating to the Management of Stray Cattle**

Clerk to Panel wrote to this Bureau on 18 March 2014, conveying the concerns about the relocation of cattle between Lantau Island and Sai Kung raised by Hon Claudia MO vide her letter to the Panel Chairman dated 17 March 2014. This Bureau is requested to provide a response. Please find our reply as follows.

**Background Information**

Over the years, the issue of stray cattle has persistently been a matter of concern to the local community, particularly in the case of South Lantau and Sai Kung town. According to a territory-wide population survey on stray cattle conducted in 2012, there were around 1 200 stray cattle in the rural areas of Hong Kong. Since local stray cattle (including brown cattle and buffalo) are not wild animals, they fall outside the ambit of the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170). Nor are they regarded in the international arena as endangered animals. That being the case, upon receipt of complaints of nuisance caused by stray cattle in the past, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) used to act on them by deploying officers to conduct on-site inspection for catching and removing the stray cattle in accordance with the power conferred by the Pounds Ordinance (Cap. 168).

AFCD has been engaging local communities, non-governmental organisations, district councils and rural committees, listening to their views and suggestions on issues related to the management of stray cattle. In recent years, the views we receive from different sectors of the community on how best stray cattle should be managed are becoming more diverse. Cattle welfare groups and the local communities affected hold different views over the issue. For instance, some conservation groups believe that stray cattle are ecologically significant and should be kept in their original dwelling places and wild areas. Animal welfare groups also consider stray cattle to be part of the community concerned and as such should be protected and allowed to live freely therein. However, some road users as well as residents and farmers being affected are of the view that stray cattle should be removed because they are causing obstruction to traffic, constitute a source of nuisance to environmental hygiene and the daily lives of residents, and may damage the crops at times.

To enhance the management of stray cattle, AFCD formulated in late 2010 a long-term work plan with a view to striking a balance between minimising the nuisance to the daily lives of residents and protecting the welfare of the cattle. Without compromising the welfare of the cattle, AFCD is taking multi-pronged measures to control and reduce the number of stray cattle so as to minimise the nuisance caused to the community and the potential danger posed to road users and the cattle themselves.

### **The “Capture-Sterilise-Relocate” (CSR) programme**

AFCD set up the dedicated Cattle Management Team in late 2011 to carry out a series of long-term management work on stray cattle. Under one of the management plans, AFCD officers would actively capture stray cattle, have the cattle sterilised and ear-tagged for identification, and then relocate them to a more remote location in the same district (the “Capture-Sterilise-Relocate” (CSR) programme).

Prior to the relocation of any stray cattle, AFCD will conduct surveillance and assessment to ensure that they forage properly and are in good health condition. As calves cannot forage on their own, AFCD will not separate them from their mothers. The cattle involved in the CSR programme are those frequently found to have caused obstruction to traffic and have been wandering on roads.

Under the CSR programme, some cattle are fitted with collars with global positioning system (GPS) devices to allow AFCD to track their movements after relocation and study their movement patterns in unfamiliar areas. Besides, AFCD officers conduct weekly on-site inspections of the places to which the cattle are relocated. From late 2011 to

February 2014, AFCD has captured a total of 473 stray brown cattle (including those repeatedly captured) under the CSR programme. Preliminary findings reveal that most of the relocated cattle are in good health. AFCD will continue to closely monitor the situation of these cattle.

### **Cross-district relocation pilot scheme**

In implementing the CSR programme, AFCD found that many cattle would find their way back to the town centre or roads of the same district in a matter of days or weeks after relocation, and become a source of nuisance to the residents and road users again. Some cattle have been captured repeatedly for four to five times after being sterilised and relocated. This shows that the current choice of relocation paths and sites might not be entirely effective in abating the nuisance caused by stray cattle to the residents or reducing the danger to road users and themselves.

Last autumn, AFCD came to realise that the number of stray cattle in Sai Kung District was close to saturation. This, coupled with the increasing number of construction projects in the district, resulted in the availability of fewer dwelling places for cattle leading to more cattle lingering on roads, significantly affecting the traffic. To reduce the traffic congestion caused by cattle and minimise the number of major traffic accidents involving them, AFCD has made reference to the suggestion made in the study report by an ecological consultant and commenced a pilot scheme under the CSR programme in last November whereby some of the stray cattle repeatedly captured on roads are relocated to a farther away location in another district (“cross-district relocation pilot scheme”).

Since the launch of the cross-district relocation pilot scheme in November 2013, AFCD has captured a total of 50 cattle (46 young and adult cattle as well as four calves accompanying their mothers). Of these cattle, 29 were relocated from Sai Kung to Shek Pik Reservoir on Lantau, and 21 from South Lantau to Sai Kung High Island Reservoir. According to the follow-up investigations by the AFCD, most of the cattle under the cross-district relocation pilot scheme are still dwelling in the areas hitherto anticipated. The scheme also proved to be serving the purpose of easing the traffic congestion problem caused by stray cattle in the areas concerned. AFCD will continue to monitor the situation and keep in view the effectiveness of the cross-district relocation pilot scheme.

## Way Forward

AFCD plans to conduct a review of the cross-district relocation pilot scheme in six months' time (i.e. around mid-2014) to evaluate the impact of the scheme on the community and the health conditions of the cattle, as well as the effectiveness of the scheme. AFCD will continue communicating with stakeholders and take different views into account.

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