



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

[English Translation]

24 December 2018

Clerk to Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attention: Miss Josephine SO)

Dear Miss SO,

**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Mosquito and Rodent Control**

Regarding the passed motion at the Panel meeting on 11 December 2018 regarding an item discussed at the Panel meeting on 13 November 2018, our response is as follows:

- (1) The Government has all along accorded high priority to the mosquito and rodent control work. The Anti-mosquito Steering Committee was upgraded as the Pest Control Steering Committee (PCSC) in July 2018. In addition to mosquito control, the the PCSC's terms of reference also cover other pest control issues, including the prevention and control of

rodents and biting midges, with a view to enhancing inter-departmental co-ordination, and reviewing the pest control work of the departments concerned in a timely manner. In view of the outbreak of local dengue fever cases this summer, the PCSC has enhanced inter-departmental co-ordination to synergise the efforts of bureaux and departments in mosquito prevention and control work. The PCSC will discuss the 2019 anti-mosquito and anti-rodent plans of member departments. It will also explore ways to enhance the Government's overall surveillance mechanism and response strategies, and to step-up co-operation among the departments.

To improve the co-ordination of pest control work of government departments for effective management of venues under their purview and enhanced monitoring of pest control work done by service contractors, the Secretary for Food and Health has issued letters to the heads of departments raising issues requiring their attention in handling the cleansing contracts for different types of premises. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has also provided contract templates on pest control for follow-up actions by contract management units in various departments to include pest control specifications in contracts upon commissioning or renewal. To increase pest control knowledge of various departments, FEHD has organised pest control training courses and talks for staff in different bureaux and departments (such as the Education Bureau, the Housing Department, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Water Supplies Department). In addition, FEHD has organised pest control talks for staff of the Hospital Authority, the property management industry, the construction industry, schools, etc.

- (2) To step up the surveillance of dengue vector, FEHD has increased the number of surveyed areas from 52 to 57 since July 2018. The survey frequency has also increased from one week to two weeks per month.

Starting from 12 September 2018, FEHD has released two additional phased Ovitrap Indices to enhance its alerting function.

The Food and Health Bureau has issued letters to the District Councils (DCs), inviting them to proactively take part in mosquito control work. Various anti-mosquito operations have been organised through the participation of local organisations and local building management companies. These operations include inspecting concerned areas, stepping up education and publicity to heighten the public awareness, and encouraging the community to actively carry out anti-mosquito measures in private premises such as at home and in private housing estates.

As early precautionary measures, FEHD and relevant departments will continue strengthening their mosquito prevention and control work and conducting territory-wide thematic mosquito prevention and control operations. Furthermore, FEHD plans to launch the ten-week territory-wide all-out anti-mosquito operations in the first quarter of 2019 to strengthen mosquito prevention work before the rainy season. Once the rainy season starts, FEHD will carry out enhanced fogging operation and work along with DCs and local communities to prevent mosquito breeding as early as possible.

To address the concern about biting midges, FEHD invited a renowned expert from the Mainland China to visit Hong Kong in 2016 and 2018 to provide guidance and recommendations on the control strategy. We plan to report to Members on our work at the Panel meeting to be held in January 2019.

- (3) As regards rodent prevention and control, FEHD has made use of the rodent infestation rate (RIR) and its trend to gauge the general situation

of rodent infestation in individual districts. The main purpose of conducting the RIR survey is to monitor the general situation of rodent infestation in the surveyed areas and reveal the extensiveness of rodent infestation in these areas. The survey is conducted every six months. Baits are set in selected localities to gather statistics on the ratio of baits bitten by rodents. In addition to the findings of the RIR survey, FEHD frontline staff have also taken into account the trails left by rodents, complaint figures and the feedback from the local community and the public etc., in evaluating rodent infestation in districts. Targeted anti-rodent operations will then be carried out in problematic areas. Moreover, FEHD will continue to explore ways to improve the RIR survey method and review the surveyed areas so as to reflect rodent problem in different districts in a more accurate manner.

To increase the sensitivity of the RIR survey and obtain a more accurate picture of the extent of the rodent problem, FEHD is conducting trial tests on new rodent baits. These tests aim to assess the attractiveness of different baits in the survey in order to select more suitable baits for the purpose. FEHD has all along been keeping in view of new rodent traps and rodenticides. Field tests will be carried out on products or technologies likely to be feasible to assess the suitability of their application in Hong Kong. A new rodent trapping device driven by pressurised gas is currently being tested at municipal services buildings in Sham Shui Po and Wong Tai Sin districts. Besides, FEHD is considering the use of night-vision video capturing and artificial intelligence in the surveillance and evaluation of the extent and severity of rodent problem (e.g. density and activities of rodents), in order to facilitate more effective and targeted application of rodenticides and rodent traps. Meanwhile, FEHD has launched a five-week special operation in December 2018, targeting hygiene problems caused by illegal disposal of food waste and refuse by food premises at rear lanes. The operation begins with a two-week education and publicity

programme, followed by enhanced enforcement actions and prosecutions in the ensuing three weeks.

To combat the rodent problem in public housing estates, the Housing Department (HD), in collaboration with FEHD, is planning an anti-rodent operation in designated target housing estates on a trial basis. The operation aims at co-ordinating the anti-rodent efforts of HD, Link and FEHD and carrying out rodent prevention and control work through the adoption of multi-pronged strategies, including stepping up cleansing operations, rodent disinfestation and enforcement action. Having regard to the effectiveness of the trial scheme and the experiences accumulated, HD may extend this mode of operation to other public housing estates. FEHD will continue to provide technical support to HD for pest control in public housing estates.

- (4) To strengthen supervision of contractors, FEHD has allocated more resources to further improve its supervision work. A total of 15 Senior Health Inspector posts were created in 2017 and 2018, and 8 Overseer posts and 22 Foreman posts will be created in 2019 for enhanced monitoring of pest control service contractors. Currently, DCs and District Councillors often reflect their observations to FEHD on the Department's service contracts, including those on cleansing and pest control. If it is found during site inspection that the performance of the contractors has failed to meet the contract requirements, FEHD will take appropriate actions in accordance with the existing sanction system, including the issuance of verbal warnings, written warnings, default notices as well as withholding/deducting monthly payment. Contractors' unsatisfactory performance records will affect their chances of successful future bidding for the Department's service contracts.

- (5) Regarding the suggestion of setting up DC-led “Funds for Improving Community's Environmental Hygiene” which may be used by DCs for enhancing environmental hygiene, the roles of DCs on district issues have been increasingly important in recent years and DCs have already been making great contribution as well as participation in community environmental hygiene issues. DCs can also allocate funds under the “District-led Actions Scheme” to prioritize and solve community issues at their discrete in regard to the needs of various districts.

Lastly, effective pest prevention and control requires the concerted efforts of all sectors of the community, including co-operation between the community and the Government. We will continue to work closely with Members and DCs to achieve better results.

Yours sincerely,

[Signed]

(Gilford LAW)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene
Director of Housing
Director of Home Affairs