

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(1)1030/20-21(04)

Ref. : CB1/PL/EA

## **Panel on Environmental Affairs**

**Meeting on 28 June 2021**

### **Updated background brief on management of wild pigs in Hong Kong prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides updated background information on the management of wild pigs in Hong Kong. It also gives a brief account of the major views and concerns expressed by Members when related issues were discussed by relevant committees of the Legislative Council ("LegCo").

#### **Background**

##### Wild pigs in Hong Kong

2. Wild pigs are the largest terrestrial mammals among the native wild animals in Hong Kong. They are widely distributed in the territory, in particular the country parks, and are adaptive to different habitats like woodlands, scrublands, grasslands and agricultural areas. If they can easily acquire food from human feeding or food remains in litterbins, they may become habituated to search for food in residential or public areas. While wild pigs are generally secretive and wary of human contact, they may become aggressive and attack humans if provoked or threatened.<sup>1</sup>

3. Under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170), no person shall, except in accordance with a special permit, hunt wild pigs and other wild animals by means of hunting appliance such as a live decoy or the emission of recorded noises, any pitfall, any arms; or any hunting appliance other than a

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Administration, there are nine, seven and two injury cases in the financial years of 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 (as of January 2021) respectively.

hunting appliance approved by the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, or have in his possession any hunting appliance other than a hunting appliance approved by the Director. Any person who contravenes the above shall be liable on conviction to a fine of \$50,000.

#### Management of wild pig nuisance

4. Before 2017, if wild pigs caused injury to human beings and/or damaged properties and if other management measures were found to be ineffective, they would be removed through hunting operations conducted by two civilian hunting teams under the authorization of both the Hong Kong Police Force ("the Police") and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD"). Such hunting operations have been suspended since 2017 and terminated in 2019 to address growing concerns about animal welfare and public safety.

5. As advised by the Administration, wild pig nuisance has been proliferating in Hong Kong in recent years. The number of complaints on wild pigs in relation to noise, hygiene, safety issues, etc. received by AFCD soared from 225 in 2011 to a record high of 1 184 in 2019. This reflects the growing intensity of human-wildlife conflict which is attributed to factors such as population density of wild pigs and changes of their feeding behavior. To abate the nuisance caused by wild pigs to the public, the Administration adopts a multi-pronged approach with a view to reducing conflicts between human and wild pigs and controlling the population growth of wild pigs in the long run.

#### *Capture, contraception and sterilization*

6. AFCD launched the pilot Capture and Contraception/Relocation Programme ("CCRP") in late 2017 and regularized the programme in 2019. Under the programme, AFCD will relocate wild pigs causing nuisance to remote countryside, as well as perform contraception or sterilization on those causing nuisance or rescued where conditions permit. Since the introduction of CCRP and up to December 2020, AFCD has caught a total of 688 wild pigs among which 297 have received contraceptive treatments or sterilization and 518 have been relocated to remote countryside farther away from residential areas.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Handling of high-risk individual wild pigs*

7. Some wild pigs may pose imminent risks to public safety in particular those that (a) have attacked people or (b) are accustomed to searching for food

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Administration, the sum of wild pigs that have received contraceptive treatments/sterilization and those have been relocated is higher than the total number of wild pigs captured because the same wild pig might have received contraceptive treatments/sterilization and was then relocated.

around built-up areas, or to approaching and snapping food from people, and also get irritated easily. To address safety concerns especially the potential serious consequences of wild pig attacks, AFCD will euthanize wild pigs that meet one or both of the above criteria so as to safeguard public safety. Such wild pigs will be captured by darting and euthanized by established methods by a veterinarian.

### *Feeding ban on wild pigs*

8. As wild pigs' reproductive rate is highly dependent on food availability and the increase in wild pig nuisance cases is largely due to intentional feeding and improper disposal of outdoor garbage, AFCD has been working closely with other departments to eliminate the pull factors at black spots by removing food residues, improving the design of refuse collection facilities and strengthening the promotion of no-feeding of wild pigs. AFCD has also specified feeding ban area under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance, at which feeding of any wild animals is prohibited.<sup>3</sup>

### *Public education*

9. AFCD has displayed banners in many feeding and nuisance black spots and organized educational activities and eco-tours at some of the black spots to enhance public knowledge on wild animals. In addition, AFCD provides technical advice to government departments and property management agents for reference on measures to reduce wild pig raids in public facilities and private properties, and to assist farmers to deal with wild pig nuisance in farms. For example, farmers are advised to erect sturdy fence to protect crops, or install electric fence or infra-red auto-trigger lightings to deter wild pigs, if they are found foraging in farmlands.

### Director of Audit's Report No. 73

10. The Audit Commission conducted a review of the control of wild and stray animal nuisances by AFCD and published the relevant report (i.e. the Director of Audit's Report No.73) ("the Audit Report") in October 2019.<sup>4</sup> The Audit Report put forth a number of recommendations for the Administration to, among other things, take measures to ensure that nuisance black spots for wild pigs are adequately covered by CCRP operations, expedite conducting

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<sup>3</sup> Under the Ordinance, Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks, part of Tai Mo Shan Country Park, Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve, a section of Tai Po Road along Caldecott Road and Piper's Hill section of Tai Po Road are specified as feeding ban area. Any person feeding wild animals in the feeding ban area is liable to a maximum fine of \$10,000. In the 2020-2021 financial year (as of February 2021), there are 40 prosecutions against illegal feeding of wild animals (including wild pigs) among which 31 are successful prosecutions.

<sup>4</sup> The Public Accounts Committee had not held any public hearing on this subject.

population surveys of wild pigs and keep in view the need to extend feeding ban area under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance to cover nuisance black spots for wild pigs.

### **Major views and concerns expressed by Members**

11. At the meeting on 28 January 2019, the Panel on Environmental Affairs ("EA Panel") discussed the Administration's enhanced management measures to address wild pig nuisance. Relevant issues were brought up at the meeting of the Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Animal Rights on 8 February 2021. Members also raised questions about the management of wild pigs during examination of Estimates of Expenditures in recent years. The major views and concerns expressed by Members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### Monitoring of wild pig population and movement

12. Members requested the Administration to step up efforts to monitor the population growth, distribution and movement of wild pigs which was critical to effective control of the nuisance and potential danger posed by wild pigs to the public.

13. The Administration advised that as wild pigs were generally solitary or in small groups, secretive, very widespread and had large home range, it was difficult to compile statistics on the number of wild pigs in Hong Kong. AFCD launched a preliminary study in 2019 to estimate the population size and reproduction trend of wild pigs in Hong Kong by applying statistic model on time-lapse data collected from infra-red cameras. Initial analysis showed that there were about 1 800 to 3 300 wild pigs in the countryside areas in Hong Kong. AFCD would collect and analyze further data and expected to complete the analysis in 2021. The Department would then work with the Wild Pig Management Advisory Group ("the Advisory Group") (comprising both local and non-local wildlife conservation experts) to devise further strategies to control the number of wild pigs in Hong Kong.

#### Effectiveness of the Capture and Contraception/Relocation Programme

14. Members queried the effectiveness of CCRP in containing the wild pig population as the number of wild pigs administered with contraceptive vaccine/surgically sterilized was limited (for instance, in the 2019-2020 financial year, among the 293 wild pigs captured, only about 36% were administered with contraceptive vaccine/surgically sterilized).

15. The Administration advised that the sites for conducting operations under CCRP were selected in accordance with the criteria in the relevant operation manual to cover all black spots as far as practicable. AFCD had

initiated a field study of contraceptive vaccine and the performance of sterilization surgery for wild pigs and conducted analysis on a number of wild pig serum samples. The results indicated that 93% of those wild pigs did not get pregnant again two to 21 months after vaccinations. As the effects of contraception on the control of wild pig population and nuisance might only be reflected in the medium to long term, it was premature at this stage to conclude CCRP's effectiveness. AFCD would increase the frequency of CCRP from 2020-2021, with a view to collecting adequate samples for evaluating the effectiveness of immuno-contraceptive vaccine on wild pigs.

#### Reducing food attraction to and combating illegal feeding of wild pigs

16. Members considered that the most effective ways to reduce the appearance of wild pigs in urban/residential areas were to stop feeding them and prevent them from getting food from refuse collection facilities. They urged the Administration to step up inspection and enforcement in this regard.

17. The Administration advised that AFCD, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") and the Environmental Protection Department had completed field trials in the third quarter of 2020 to test new designs of wild animal resistant litter containers for reducing scavenging for food by wild animals at outdoor refuse collection facilities. The results showed that the new designs could effectively reduce wildlife nuisance. FEHD would deploy the newly-designed litter containers in suitable sites on a need basis.

18. As regards illegal feeding of wild pigs, AFCD had been arranging regular patrol at the feeding ban area and would take prosecution actions against contravention. The patrolling and enforcement arrangements would be reviewed from time to time having regard to the actual situation and intelligence gathered. AFCD would deploy additional manpower to conduct enforcement and blitz operations, and joint operations with other concerned departments, as and when appropriate to strengthen combat against illegal feeding of wild animals. Looking ahead, AFCD planned to conduct a consultancy study to analyze the reasons for feeding wild pigs by the public for formulating more targeted publicity programmes and long-term management strategy; and initiate discussion on extending the feeding ban area with experts of the Advisory Group.

#### Hunting of wild pigs

19. At the meeting on 28 January 2019, EA Panel passed a motion urging the Government to, among others, resume operations conducted by the civilian hunting teams when necessary. Some Members even suggested that the Administration should set up official hunting teams to better ensure that all hunting operations were carried out according to prescribed requirements and procedures.

20. The Administration advised that having regard to the growing concern of animal welfare and the safety constraints for conducting hunting operations in public or residential areas, such hunting operations had been suspended since 2017 and formally terminated in 2019. Compared to hunting where an average of less than one wild pig was hunted per operation, three wild pigs were captured on average in each operation of CCRP indicating a higher capture efficiency of the latter. Currently, if members of the public were disturbed by wild pigs or found any wild pig injured or trapped, or straying in urban areas, they might call 1823 to notify AFCD for taking follow-up actions. When a wild pig was posing immediate threats to life and property, the Police should be called for emergency assistance.

### **Council questions**

21 Members raised questions about the management of wild pigs at various Council meetings in the Sixth LegCo. The questions and the Administration's replies are hyperlinked in the **Appendix**.

### **Latest development**

22. At the meeting on 28 June 2021, the Administration will brief EA Panel on the latest progress of implementation of the management plan for wild pigs.

### **Relevant papers**

23. A list of relevant papers is set out in the **Appendix**.

## Management of wild pigs in Hong Kong

## List of relevant papers

Date of meeting	Event	Paper
5 April 2017	Special meeting of the Finance Committee ("FC") for examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2017-2018	Written questions raised by Members and the Administration's replies (Reply serial numbers: <a href="#">ENB012, 016</a> , <a href="#">S-ENB01</a> )
17 April 2018	Special meeting of FC for examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2018-2019	Written questions raised by Members and the Administration's replies (Reply serial numbers: <a href="#">ENB019, 024, 224</a> )
22 October 2018	Policy briefing of the Panel on Environmental Affairs ("EA Panel")	Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)276/18-19</a> )
28 January 2019	Meeting of EA Panel	Administration's paper on "Enhanced Management of Wild Pigs" (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)487/18-19(05)</a> )  Background brief on "Management of wild pigs in Hong Kong" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)487/18-19(06)</a> )  Motion passed under the agenda item of "Enhanced management of wild pigs" at the meeting on 28 January 2019 (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)527/18-19(02)</a> )

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Paper</b>
		<p>Administration's response to the motion passed on the agenda item of "Enhanced management of wild pigs" at the meeting on 28 January 2019 (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)746/18-19(01)</a>)</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)917/18-19</a>)</p>
9 April 2019	Special meeting of FC for examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2019-2020	Written questions raised by Members and the Administration's replies (Reply serial numbers: <a href="#">ENB007, 009, 016, 017, 019, 020, 023, 193, 203, 209</a> )
21 June 2019*	Report of EA Panel to the Legislative Council	Report of the Panel on Environmental Affairs for submission to the Legislative Council (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)1182/18-19</a> )
29 October 2019	Policy briefing of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(2)324/19-20</a> )
6 April 2020	Special meeting of FC for examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2020-2021	Written questions raised by Members and the Administration's replies (Reply serial numbers: <a href="#">ENB010, 013, 016, 171, 173, 199</a> )



<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Paper</b>
8 February 2021	Meeting of the Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Animal Rights	Administration's paper on "Management of stray cattle and handling nuisances of wild animals" (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(2)737/20-21(01)</a> )  Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(2)737/20-21(02)</a> )
13 April 2021	Special meeting of FC for examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2021-2022	Written questions raised by Members and the Administration's replies (Reply serial numbers: <a href="#">ENB003, 015, 023</a> )

\*Issue date of paper

**Hyperlinks to Director of Audit's Report No. 73 and Public Accounts Committee reports:**

<b>Date of issuance/tabling</b>	<b>Report</b>
28 October 2019	Director of Audit's Report No. 73  <a href="#">Chapter 4</a> on "Control of wild and stray animal nuisances"
26 February 2020	Public Accounts Committee Report No. 73  <a href="#">Chapter 4 of Part 9</a> on "Control of wild and stray animal nuisances"
27 May 2020	<a href="#">The Government Minute</a> in response to the Report of the Public Accounts Committee No. 73 of February 2020
24 February 2021	Public Accounts Committee Report No. 75  <a href="#">Part 5</a> on "Control of wild and stray animal nuisances"

<b>Date of issuance/tabling</b>	<b>Report</b>
26 May 2021	<a href="#">The Government Minute</a> in response to the Report of the Public Accounts Committee No. 75 of February 2021

**Hyperlinks to relevant Council questions:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Council Question</b>
21 March 2018	<a href="#">Press release</a> on Council question (oral) on wild pigs causing nuisances to the public
12 December 2018	<a href="#">Press release</a> on Council question (written) on nuisance caused by wild pigs
9 January 2019	<a href="#">Press release</a> on Council question (written) on nuisance caused by wild pigs
27 March 2019	<a href="#">Press release</a> on Council question (written) on preventing wild animals from causing injuries and nuisances to residents
6 January 2021	<a href="#">Press release</a> on Council question (written) on nuisances caused by wild pigs