

AFCD condemns action to stop others from surrendering hamsters

In response to some people stopping others from surrendering hamsters and taking over hamsters members of the public intended to surrender to the New Territories South Animal Management Centre (NTSAMC) of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the AFCD condemns such action and stresses that it obstructs the department from carrying out its work, and will also pose health risks to themselves and public. The AFCD demands them to stop such action immediately and return the hamsters taken away.

An AFCD spokesman said, "The basis of the AFCD's strong advice to members of the public to surrender their hamsters purchased in local pet shops on or after December 22, 2021, to the department for humane dispatch is that a pet shop worker was confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 and samples taken from hamsters in the pet shop concerned tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Hence, there is evidence showing that the hamsters concerned were infected with the virus. Onset of symptoms may not be triggered immediately after the hamsters have been infected and negative test results at the moment do not necessarily mean that the hamsters concerned have not been infected. In other words, touching or keeping these hamsters can cause infection and also risk spreading the virus."

"According to AFCD's records, recently only two consignments of hamsters were imported into Hong Kong on December 22, 2021 and January 7, 2022 respectively. Upon consulting experts, the AFCD opined that the two consignments of hamsters have a higher risk of carrying the COVID-19 virus, while hamsters imported into Hong Kong beforehand is relatively less risky. Thus, the AFCD strongly advises members of the public to surrender hamsters purchased in local pet shops on or after December 22 last year to the department for humane dispatch. Those purchased before the date can be kept," the spokesman reiterated.

As at January 20, 68 hamsters have been received by the NTSAMC.

Under the premise of safeguarding public health, the spokesman demands them to refrain from stopping members of the public to surrender hamsters immediately and return those hamsters taken away. The AFCD reported the case yesterday (January 20) to the police. If the people concerned continue with such action, or fail to return the hamsters taken away, the AFCD will stringently follow up and hand it over to the police for handling.