

Government departments enhance pest control work

The inter-departmental Pest Control Steering Committee (PCSC) held a meeting today (June 22) to review the situation of mosquito proliferation since the start of the rainy season this year, especially as there were multiple rainstorms during the second half of May and the first half of June, and that the monthly gravidtrap index for *Aedes albopictus* may rise significantly in June. The PCSC discussed mosquito prevention and control work to be further enhanced, including co-ordination of frontline staff among departments at the district level, as well as formulation of a series of enhanced surveillance and anti-rodent work targeting the rodent problem in back alleys.

At the meeting, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) reviewed the specific causes leading to the Area Gravidtrap Index exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent in individual surveyed areas this year and the improvement work to be carried out. The FEHD also reminded various departments to pay special attention to environments usually prone to mosquito breeding such as nullahs, keyholes of manholes, sand traps, scaffolding, discarded containers, tree holes and fallen leaves, etc. In addition to the continuous elimination of breeding grounds and regular fogging operations, various departments will update the blackspots of mosquito infestations targeting the above problems and also step up anti-mosquito work. Meanwhile, various departments have put in place about 3 100 highly effective new mosquito traps in areas under their purview.

In addition to taking action after a mosquito or rodent proliferation is found, various departments will also enhance contract management of pest control work to ensure that the frontline workers comply with the Government's technical guidelines and to enhance training. The departments will also strengthen supervision of their service contractors to ensure that the contractors carry out pest control work in accordance with the requirements. Furthermore, various departments will conduct detailed inspections at their venues regularly. They will also adopt a more proactive and stringent approach in management of pest control service contractors, which includes surprise checks to ensure that the pest control work is completed according to the work programme, and to guarantee service quality.

In order to enhance inter-departmental co-ordination at the district level, various departments will assign relatively senior staff to participate in the monthly meetings convened by the FEHD at the district level to report their mosquito prevention and control work, and review the implementation details of their work to supervise their frontline workers to take necessary follow-up actions as soon as possible.

Moreover, the Government reminds the public and property management companies to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures

including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds during the current hot and rainy season in Hong Kong. To prevent mosquito-borne diseases, those staying in the natural environment should take appropriate personal protective measures against mosquitoes, such as avoiding staying in the vicinity of shrubby areas for a long time, wearing light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers, and applying DEET-containing insect repellent.

Regarding rodent prevention and control, in addition to routine work, the relevant departments will implement a series of enhanced measures against rodent infestations in back alleys in the second half of this year. In the third quarter this year, the FEHD plans to carry out operations targeting at improper dumping of refuse by food premises in areas in Wan Chai and Kwun Tong where rodent infestation is more severe. Apart from enforcement actions, the FEHD will discuss with the local communities about an extension of opening hours of refuse collection points in the community to facilitate disposal of domestic waste and food refuse by neighbourhoods and small-scale shops nearby. The FEHD and the Home Affairs Department will continue to make referrals to the Highways Department in relation to back alleys that require improvement work with reference to the situation of individual back alleys. The Highways Department has completed 122 improvement work items in back alleys from last year till May this year, including repairing road surfaces or damaged surface channels as well as local repaving. The above-mentioned work by various departments helps eliminate the survival conditions of rodents.

The FEHD is conducting field trials of thermal imaging cameras in about 150 back alleys in Kowloon City for recording rodent activity and its extent. It is also considering formulating a new rodent index targeting rodent infestation in back alleys. Moreover, it will also install thermal imaging cameras before and after the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas in nine districts to record rodent activities. The FEHD will compare the data collected when the operations end in late June with a view to quantifying and reviewing the effectiveness of the operations.

Representatives from three bureaux and 21 departments/organisation attended today's meeting.