

Hamster surrendered by citizen tested positive for COVID-19 virus

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (January 23) announced that a hamster surrendered by a member of the public tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.

An AFCD spokesman said, "During the period from January 17 to 22, the AFCD collected 1 793 animal samples for COVID-19 virus tests. Samples were collected from hamsters surrendered by members of the public, hamsters and small animals collected from all pet shops in Hong Kong selling hamsters and a warehouse in Tai Po. All the tests have been completed. Results show that among the 113 samples taken from hamsters surrendered by members of the public, two samples drawn from a hamster collected on January 19 tested positive. The Centre for Health Protection (CHP), Department of Health was notified of the above results for their follow-up."

"Out of the 125 samples taken by the AFCD earlier on from a pet shop, Little Boss in Causeway Bay under the I Love Rabbit group, seven samples drawn from seven hamsters tested positive. Separately, out of the 49 samples collected from another outlet in Causeway Bay under the same group, two samples from two hamsters also tested positive. As for the 511 samples taken from the warehouse in Tai Po, one sample from a hamster also tested positive. The CHP was also notified of the results for their follow-up," the spokesman continued.

He noted that 77 hamsters had been surrendered to the AFCD as at January 22 and COVID-19 tests had been conducted on 71 of them. The AFCD will continue to conduct COVID-19 testing on the hamsters surrendered.

Furthermore, 34 environmental swabs taken earlier on from the group's three outlets in Mong Kok, three outlets in Causeway Bay, an outlet in Tai Po, an outlet in Yuen Long, and a boarding establishment in Causeway Bay as well as the Tai Po warehouse were also tested positive by the CHP.

As at January 22, a total of 2 512 animals, including 2 229 hamsters, were humanely dispatched.

Import of all small mammals (including hamsters) has already been banned. The department is also reviewing the quarantine requirements for importing this type of animals into Hong Kong in future, including considering imposing a requirement for animals concerned to undergo testing for the COVID-19 virus prior to departure by the exporting country or region and to be tested again upon arrival in Hong Kong.

In view of the fact that a hamster surrendered by a member of the public tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, the spokesman strongly advises members of the public again to surrender to the department as soon as possible their hamsters purchased in local pet shops on or after December 22,

2021 for humane dispatch.

For the arrangement of surrendering hamsters to the department, please call 2691 2269. Members of the public can also send their hamsters to the New Territories South Animal Management Centre of the AFCD.