

LCQ10: Nuisance caused by wild pigs

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 9):

Question:

In recent years, the number of complaints received by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) about appearance of wild pigs or their causing nuisance has been on the rise, namely from 294 cases in 2013 to 738 cases in 2017, and the number of cases on Hong Kong Island rose from 98 to 324 in the same period, representing the highest rate of increase among all districts. Moreover, it has been reported that the AFCD received 111 reports on appearance of wild pigs or their causing nuisance in the Southern District alone between January and July last year. Such figures reflect that the area of movement of wild pigs has expanded to the urban areas, posing serious threats to the personal safety of members of the public. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of (i) complaints about appearance of wild pigs or their causing nuisance and (ii) reports on wild pigs damaging public property and injuring people, which were received by the AFCD last year, with a breakdown by District Council (DC) district;

(2) whether it knows the respective current numbers of wild pigs in various DC districts in Hong Kong; if not, whether it will make estimations;

(3) as the Government indicated last year that the AFCD "is conducting a comprehensive review of the current strategies and measures for the management of wild pigs [and therefore] the hunting operations by the [wild pig] hunting teams have been suspended since 2017", and a two-year Pilot Study on the Contraception and Relocation of Wild Pigs (Pilot Study) was launched in October of the same year, of the time when the review will be completed, and the number of wild pigs injected with contraceptive vaccines to date; the effectiveness of the Pilot Study; if the Pilot Study is ineffective, whether it will let the wild pig hunting teams resume their hunting operations; and

(4) of the number of cases in the past five years in which members of the public were prosecuted for feeding wild pigs; whether it will enhance the liaison work with the property management companies, owners' corporations and residents in the vicinity of the locations where wild pigs have appeared before, and provide them with guidance on how to guard against attacks by wild pigs?

Reply:

President,

The Government is very concerned about the nuisance and potential hazards to the public caused by wild pigs. We are reviewing our existing measures and strategies for the management of wild pigs and will submit a discussion paper to the Panel on Environmental Affairs of the Legislative Council in due course.

In consultation with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), our reply to the question raised by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip is as follows:

(1) The AFCD received 679 reports on wild pig sighting or nuisance from January to October 2018, of which five of them involved injury to members of the public. The AFCD does not have records of public facilities damaged by wild pigs. The number of reports on wild pig sighting or nuisance and injury with break down by district is tabulated as follows:

District	Number of reports on wild pig sighting or nuisance / number of reports on injury (note)
Central and Western	70 (1)
Wan Chai	69
Eastern	42
Southern	173 (1)
Yau Tsim Mong	0
Sham Shui Po	2
Kowloon City	7
Wong Tai Sin	9 (1)
Kwun Tong	8
Kwai Tsing	8
Tsuen Wan	36
Tuen Mun	38
Yuen Long	10
North	26
Tai Po	40 (2)
Sha Tin	50
Sai Kung	86
Islands	5

Note: Figures in brackets denote the number of reports on injury.

(2) Wild pigs used to be more abundant in the countryside of the New Territories. However, according to the AFCD's surveys, wild pigs are now commonly sighted in various districts of Hong Kong. Since wild pigs are generally solitary or live in small groups, secretive in nature, widely distributed and have very extensive home range, the AFCD does not have the

number of wild pigs in Hong Kong. Technically speaking, there is no reliable approach to estimate the number of wild pigs in Hong Kong.

(3) To address the nuisance of wild pigs, the AFCD adopts a multipronged approach, namely managing wild pig nuisance and monitoring wild pig population, reducing food attraction, strengthening public education to remind the public not to feed wild animals (including wild pigs) with a view to relieving wild pigs' nuisance to the public, and the AFCD will evaluate the effectiveness of the measures from time to time.

In order to alleviate more effectively the potential nuisance caused by wild pigs in residential areas, the AFCD is conducting a comprehensive review on the measures and strategies for the management of wild pigs. Considering different opinions from society, as well as the oppositions from some concern groups on animal interests, the AFCD has suspended hunting operations arranged by the civilian hunting teams since 2017 until the completion of the review on management measures and strategies.

After the suspension of hunting operations, the AFCD has introduced the Pilot Capture and Contraception/Relocation Programme (Pilot CCRP) to handle the immediate nuisance of wild pigs at residential areas. The AFCD will provide contraceptive treatment and/or relocate the wild pigs captured. Since the launch of the Pilot CCRP, an average of three wild pigs were captured in each operation, which is more efficient than the hunting operation (on average less than one wild pig captured per operation). In addition, the trial of treating wild pigs causing nuisance with contraceptive vaccine and sterilisation surgery is the first of its kind in the world. The aim of the trial is to evaluate the effectiveness of the contraceptive vaccine and the feasibility of arranging sterilisation surgery for wild pigs in the field. The trial contraceptive/sterilisation programme was officially launched in February 2018. As at December 2018, the AFCD rendered contraceptive/sterilisation treatments to 54 wild pigs. The AFCD expects to complete the evaluation by the end of 2019.

(4) Under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170), feeding of wild animals (including wild pigs) in feeding ban areas, such as Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks, part of Tai Mo Shan Country Park, Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve, area of Caldecott Road and Piper's Hill section of Tai Po Road, will be liable to prosecution and a maximum fine of \$10,000. The AFCD conducts regular patrols at the feeding ban areas. There were three successful cases of prosecution against feeding of wild pigs in the feeding ban areas over the past five years.

If wild pigs are frequently spotted scavenging for food from feeders in the vicinity of residential areas outside the feeding ban areas, the AFCD will put up banners or posters at suitable places in these areas to remind the public not to feed wild animals. Wherever possible, the AFCD will also set up infra-red automatic cameras to monitor the feeding activities and appearance of wild pigs. The information so collected will be referred to relevant departments, which could issue \$1,500 fixed penalty notices to persons who violate the Fixed Penalty (Public Cleanliness and Obstruction)

Ordinance (Cap. 570) and follow-up on the environmental hygiene problems caused by such feeding. The AFCD will continue to offer advice to members of the public who may be potentially affected, property management offices, owners' corporations and District Councilors on the handling and prevention of nuisance caused by wild pigs.

Besides, wild animals will mistake feeding as a stable food supply and will be attracted to urban or residential areas in the vicinity. To tackle the issue of feeding, the AFCD is conducting a series of publicity and education programmes, including promotion on TV, radio and public transports, organising fun days, roving exhibitions, public lectures and visits, etc. to publicise the negative consequences of feeding wild animals. The AFCD has also recently launched and broadcasted Announcements in the Public Interest together with a series of micro-movies titled "Don't Feed Wild Animals and Feral Pigeons" at social media platforms and public areas, to inform the public about the negative consequences of feeding wild animals. Furthermore, the AFCD has commissioned a contractor to conduct a pilot education programme in the feeding ban area designated under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance since November last year. The contractor staff will not only share information about wild animals with the public, but also advise them not to feed wild animals (including monkeys and wild pigs).