

## LCQ12: Nuisances caused by wild pigs

Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 6):

Question:

The Government has since 2017 suspended arranging hunting teams to carry out wild pig hunting operations, pending a decision on the strategies and measures for the management of wild pigs to be made upon completion of a review. In October of the same year, the Government launched the Capture and Contraception/Relocation Programme (CCRP) on a pilot basis to address the persistent nuisances caused by wild pigs in the urban areas. However, some members of the public have complained to me that incidents of wild pigs attacking and injuring members of the public, spreading African swine fever as well as damaging crops and other properties after intruding into residential areas, farms and urban areas have still occurred incessantly in recent years. Those members of the public consider that such a situation has demonstrated the ineffectiveness of CCRP and hence the necessity for the Government to adopt new approaches to effectively tackle the problems of proliferation of wild pigs. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of operations conducted under CCRP last year; the respective numbers of wild pigs (i) captured, (ii) administered with contraceptive vaccine or surgically sterilised, and (iii) relocated to remote countryside in such operations;

(2) of the number of complaints about nuisances caused by wild pigs received in each of the past five years, and the total value of property losses reported by members of the public; whether it has set up a dedicated telephone hotline to receive this kind of complaints and take timely follow-up actions;

(3) as the Government indicated in 2019 that the evaluation of (i) the effectiveness of the contraceptive vaccine in use and (ii) the feasibility of conducting sterilisation surgery for wild pigs in the field, under CCRP would be completed by the end of that year, of the evaluation results, and when such results will be published; whether the review on the strategies and measures for the management of wild pigs has been completed; if so, of the outcome; whether it will arrange the hunting teams to conduct wild pigs hunting operations again, or adopt other approaches, to tackle the problems of proliferation of wild pigs;

(4) whether it will consider adopting other options to tackle the problem of overbreeding of wild pigs, and conducting a systematic assessment of such fertility trend; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) given that the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

commissioned in 2018 a local university to examine and improve the design of the refuse collection facilities being used in the residential areas and on streets to prevent wild animals such as wild pigs from wantonly destroying such facilities in order to forage food from them, and that trials have been conducted on three improved designs at more than 40 locations, of the trial results and the follow-up work; when it will completely switch to using the newly designed facilities; and

(6) of the number of prosecutions instituted in the past five years by the Government by invoking the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) against persons who fed wild pigs illegally, and the major penalties imposed on the convicted persons; whether it has reviewed the procedures and methodologies of the relevant law enforcement actions (including the installation of closed circuit television systems and law enforcement by law enforcement officers in plain clothes and through surprise operations); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been closely monitoring the nuisance caused by wild animals to the public. For the management of wild pigs, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) launched the pilot Capture and Contraception/Relocation Programme (CCRP) in late 2017 to address the nuisance problem caused by wild pigs in urban areas. The AFCD will relocate wild pigs causing nuisance away from residential areas to remote countryside in order to provide immediate relief to the nuisance problem. They will also perform contraception or sterilisation on wild pigs causing nuisance or those rescued where conditions permit to prevent the increase in the number of wild pigs habitually looking for food in residential areas. The AFCD has regularised the relevant work since 2019.

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Steven Ho is as follows:

(1) Since the commencement of the CCRP in late 2017 and up to November 2020, the AFCD has arranged 128 operations and caught 666 wild pigs in total. Among them, 296 received contraceptive treatments or sterilisation; 499 were relocated to remote countryside farther away from residential areas.

(2) When members of the public encounter wild pig nuisance, they could notify the AFCD to take follow-up actions by calling the round-the-clock Government Hotline 1823. The number of complaints on wild pigs received by the AFCD over the past five years is tabulated as follows:

Year	Number of complaints
2016	583
2017	738
2018	929
2019	1 184

The AFCD does not have information relating to the loss of valuables caused by wild pig nuisance.

(3) The field study of contraceptive vaccine and the performance of sterilisation surgery for wild pigs initiated by the AFCD are the first of their kinds in the world. To assess the effectiveness of the contraceptive vaccine, the AFCD has conducted analysis on a number of wild pig serum samples. The results of the analysis indicated that 93 per cent of those wild pigs did not get pregnant again two to 21 months after vaccinations. As the effect of contraception on the control of wild pig nuisance is on a medium to long term basis, it is premature at this stage to draw conclusion on its effectiveness. The AFCD will continue to collect samples to monitor the long-term effectiveness of the vaccine. The AFCD has also started to conduct sterilisation surgery on wild pigs in the field since 2018. Although the effect of sterilisation surgery is permanent, the process is complicated and requires a long preparation time. Furthermore, it is difficult to perform such surgery in certain environment (e.g. restricted space, difficult terrain or lack of traffic connection) or urgent situations. Thus, it cannot completely replace the contraceptive vaccine treatment.

Having weighed all pros and cons, especially public safety, the AFCD formally terminated the operations of wild pig hunting teams in 2019. The AFCD has set up an advisory group comprising both local and non-local wildlife conservation experts (advisory group) to advise on the management of wild pigs. The AFCD holds regular meetings with the advisory group to review the management strategies on wild pigs.

(4) Studies reveal that wild pigs' reproductive rate is highly dependent on food availability. The AFCD's investigation also reveals that the increase in wild pig nuisance cases in recent years is largely due to intentional feeding and improper disposal of outdoor garbage. In this regard, other than relocation and contraception/sterilisation of wild pigs habitually looking for food in residential areas, the AFCD has been working closely with relevant departments to eliminate the pull factors at black spots by removing food residues, strengthening the promotion of no-feeding of wild pigs, and improving the design of refuse collection facilities, etc.

In order to gather more information for refining the management strategies in the future, the AFCD launched a preliminary study in 2019 to estimate the population size of wild pigs by applying statistic model on time-lapse data collected from infra-red cameras. The results were used to calculate the population size and reproduction trend of wild pigs in the countryside areas in Hong Kong. Initial analysis showed that there were about 1 800 to 3 300 wild pigs in the countryside areas in Hong Kong. The AFCD will collect and analyse further data and expects to complete the analysis in 2021. The department will then work with the advisory group on strategies to further control the number of wild pigs in Hong Kong.

(5) The AFCD has commissioned a consultancy study with the Food and

Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Environmental Protection Department to improve the design of litter containers and refuse collection facilities with a view to reducing scavenging for food from outdoor refuse by wild pigs and monkeys. The contractor has developed three new designs of wild pigs or monkeys-resistant litter containers which were tested at over 70 sites frequently disturbed by wild animals throughout the territories. All field trials were completed in the third quarter of 2020. Evaluation results suggested that the new designs can effectively reduce wildlife nuisance. The FEHD will deploy the newly-designed litter containers in more suitable sites based on actual needs to reduce the nuisance of wild animals.

(6) 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 places under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) at which the feeding of any wild animals are prohibited (feeding ban area). Any person feeding wild animals in the feeding ban area is liable to a maximum fine of \$10,000.

The information on prosecutions against illegal feeding of wild animals (including wild pigs) over the past five years is tabulated as follows:

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of prosecutions against illegal feeding of wild animals (Note)	66	70	61	25	36
Number of successful prosecutions against illegal feeding of wild animals (Note)	57	60	55	20	35
Highest fine of successful prosecutions (\$)	1,200	1,500	1,500	1,000	2,000

Note: Some of the prosecutions instituted in a certain year might be processed in the next year.

The AFCD arranges regular patrol at the feeding ban area and will take prosecution actions against anyone who has contravened the prohibition of feeding wild animals, subject to the availability of sufficient evidence. The AFCD will, from time to time, review the patrolling and enforcement arrangements at the feeding ban area in accordance with the actual situation and intelligence gathered, including deployment of additional manpower to conduct enforcement and blitz operations at night and on public holidays. Joint operations with other concerned departments will also be conducted to strengthen combat against illegal feeding of wild animals.