

FEHD releases Rodent Infestation Rate for 2018

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) announced today (March 6) that the overall Rodent Infestation Rate (RIR) for 2018 was 3.4 per cent, slightly lower than the figure recorded in 2017 (3.5 per cent). Rodent infestation in public areas in the territory was generally stable.

An FEHD spokesman said, "Rodent infestation was not extensive in the areas surveyed as the overall RIRs of all districts were below 10 per cent for 2018.

"In view of relatively high RIRs in individual districts for the second half of 2018, such as Kowloon City District (11.1 per cent), apart from regular anti-rodent work, the FEHD has also enhanced rodent prevention and control measures, including filling up holes and cracks on floor surfaces, adjusting the location of baiting points and rodent traps, providing advice on rodent prevention and control to property management companies of private buildings, and arranging health talks and promotional activities, in areas where rodent activity was detected during the survey period."

There is no internationally adopted RIR. When devising the RIR, the FEHD made reference to overseas practices and the actual situation of Hong Kong. The overall RIR is the average infestation rate of the districts during the period. The district RIR assesses the distribution of the rodent problem in public places covered during the surveillance period. The district RIR is divided into three levels. Level 1 (less than 10 per cent) indicates that rodent infestation is not extensive in the area surveyed. Level 2 (between 10 per cent and 19 per cent) indicates that rodent infestation is slightly extensive in the area surveyed, and the FEHD will strengthen rodent disinfestation operations there. Level 3 (20 per cent or above) indicates that rodent infestation is extensive. The relevant government departments will form a joint task force and launch special rodent prevention and control operations to strengthen rodent disinfestation, environmental improvement and cleaning services comprehensively, and promote messages of rodent prevention and control in the community.

The spokesman added, "The district RIRs may not fully reflect the actual situation of rodent infestation in the individual locations of the district. When conducting rodent prevention and control operations, the FEHD makes appropriate adjustments to the work in individual districts from time to time, taking into account reports from front-line staff and the views of the relevant District Councils and the local community, as well as the district RIR."

The FEHD is continuing to roll out the territory-wide anti-rodent campaign in two phases this year. The first phase was launched in early January and will run until March 15. The second phase, to last for 10 weeks, will be launched in July. During the campaign period, the FEHD will enhance

its inspections and rodent prevention and control measures in target areas including markets, municipal services buildings, hawker bazaars, typhoon shelters, lanes adjacent to food premises and other problematic spots and their peripheries.

In view of the fruitful results of the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas, the FEHD also plans to conduct two rounds of the special operation between the two phases of the territory-wide anti-rodent campaign this year, during which multi-pronged strategies, including improving environmental hygiene and stepping up rodent disinfestation and enforcement actions, will continue to be adopted to strengthen rodent prevention and control at the district level.

In addition, the FEHD is strengthening co-operation with other government departments and provides them with technical assistance in implementation of effective rodent prevention and control measures in areas under their purview, which includes the anti-rodent operations in designated target areas being conducted by the Housing Department, with the support of the FEHD, on a trial basis in two public housing estates to intensify the rodent prevention and control work. The FEHD will also continue to conduct studies and tests on various technologies, such as night vision cameras, thermal imaging cameras and rodent trapping devices driven by pressurised gas, with the aim of enhancing the surveillance of rodent activity and the effectiveness of rodent control.

The spokesman stressed that effective rodent prevention and control hinges on sustained co-operation between the community and the Government. Apart from enhancing the rodent prevention and control work in all districts, the FEHD will also step up public education and publicity targeting different sectors of the community, including co-organising promotional activities with District Councils, to encourage the public to actively participate in the anti-rodent campaigns, and to prevent rodent infestation by eliminating the three survival conditions of rodents, namely food, harbourage and passages, meaning the elimination of the food sources and hiding places of rodents, as well as blockage of their dispersal routes.

For more information on rodent prevention and control measures and the RIR, please visit the FEHD website at www.fehd.gov.hk.

Selection of sites for sale under Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme 2019

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) has decided to convert two public rental housing (PRH) developments for use and sale under the Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH) 2019.

A spokesman for the HA said today (March 6) that the conversion was approved by the Strategic Planning Committee of the HA at its meeting on March 4. The two developments are located respectively at Chai Wan Road, Chai Wan and Tsing Hung Road, Tsing Yi.

The Chai Wan site, providing 828 flats is expected to be ready for occupation by the fourth quarter of 2022. The Tsing Yi site will provide 2 868 flats and is expected to be ready for occupation by the third quarter of 2023. The HA plans to launch the pre-sale of these flats by the end of this year.

"The Subsidised Housing Committee of the HA agreed to regularise the GSH in January 2018. The Committee also decided that it should be prudent to implement GSH at a more modest pace to gather experience, reduce the risk of unsold flats and minimise impact on the waiting time for PRH applicants," the spokesman said.

"In line with this incremental approach and in the light of the positive response to the pilot GSH in 2016 and GSH 2018, the Strategic Planning Committee decided to convert the two PRH developments mentioned above for use of GSH 2019.

"Given the incremental approach, we will continue to take account of operational experience and sales response, and consider the suitability of PRH projects for conversion to GSH projects each year," the spokesman said.

In considering the suitability of PRH projects for conversion to GSH, HA will make reference to the following established principles:

1. While a site may include certain public facilities, it should not contain public facilities that will incur very high management and/or maintenance fees;
2. The conversion of a PRH site to GSH development should not result in substantive changes to the original planning;
3. The site should preferably be a standalone one, or can be easily carved out from a PRH development; and
4. Any PRH development that will be completed shortly is not suitable.

Details of the two GSH 2019 sites are set out in the HA paper (paper no: HA 06/19) which has been uploaded onto HA website:

www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/about-us/housing-authority/ha-paper-library/index.html.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, March 6, 2019 is 103.4 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

Gazettal of Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Tax Concessions) Bill 2019

The Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Tax Concessions) Bill 2019 will be gazetted on March 8. The Bill seeks to implement concessionary tax measures proposed in the 2019-20 Budget.

The 2019-20 Budget has proposed one-off reductions of salaries tax, tax under personal assessment and profits tax for the year of assessment 2018/19 by 75 per cent, subject to a ceiling of \$20,000 per case. The reductions will be reflected in taxpayers' final tax payable for the year of assessment 2018/19. The proposed one-off reductions will benefit 1.91 million taxpayers of salaries tax and tax under personal assessment as well as 145 000 tax-paying corporations and unincorporated businesses. The total revenue forgone in 2019-20 will amount to \$18.9 billion.

The Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council on March 20.

Farm owner convicted of supplying strawberries with false trade description

A farm owner was convicted and fined \$5,000 today (March 6) at Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts for supplying strawberries to which a false trade description had been applied, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Hong Kong Customs earlier received information alleging the sale of strawberries with a false trade description at a farm. Customs officers later

conducted a test-buy operation at a pick-your-own farm in Yuen Long and purchased strawberries labelled as the Japan Fukuoka Prefecture Hakata Amaou variety.

After examination by the Government Laboratory and the variety owner, the strawberries were confirmed to be not of the declared variety.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TD0 and consumers to procure products at reputable shops.

Under the TD0, any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TD0 to the Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).