

## Import of poultry meat and products from City of Łódź and Pabianicki District of Łódzkie in Poland suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (March 9) that in view of a notification from the General Veterinary Inspectorate of Poland about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N8 avian influenza in the City of Łódź of Łódzkie in Poland, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products, including poultry eggs, from the city and the Pabianicki District nearby with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong imported about 17 720 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and 34.26 million poultry eggs from Poland last year, according to the Census and Statistics Department.

"The CFS has contacted the Polish authorities over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the World Organisation for Animal Health and the relevant authorities on avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

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## Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (March 9) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From March 1 to 7, two community-acquired and one imported LD cases were reported:

1. A male patient, aged 57 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Leung Wai House, Leung King Estate, Tuen Mun;
2. A male patient, aged 84 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Stage 6, Mei Foo Sun Chuen, Sham Shui Po; and

3. A male patient of an imported case, aged 63 with underlying illnesses, who stayed in Shenzhen during the entire incubation period.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposures and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of March 7 this year, 30 LD cases had been reported. In 2019 and 2018, there were 105 cases each year.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus which support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;

- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 µm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
  1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
  2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
  3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
  4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
  5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

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## [Effective Exchange Rate Index](#)

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, March 9, 2020 is 105.9 (same as last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, March 7, 2020 was 105.9 (down 0.3 against last Friday's index).

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## [Missing man in Cheung Sha Wan located](#)

A man who went missing in Cheung Sha Wan has been located.

So Fung-shing, aged 64, went missing after he left an elderly home on Castle Peak Road in the small hours of March 4. Staff of the elderly home made a report to Police on the same day.

The man returned to the elderly home on March 7 morning. He sustained no

injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

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## **Public Sector Trial Scheme invites projects for combating COVID-19**

To combat the COVID-19 epidemic, the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) today (March 9) launched a special call under the Public Sector Trial Scheme for projects to support product development and application of technologies for the prevention and control of the disease. Applications will be accepted from today until April 10.

This special round aims to fund trials of research and development (R&D) outcomes in the local public sector relating to detection, diagnosis or surveillance of the COVID-19 virus, or reduction of the risks of infection and its spread. The R&D outcomes should be immediately ready for trials by government departments or the relevant public organisations to bring about benefits for the community in fighting the epidemic in the near future.

The target funding recipients are local R&D centres, universities and other designated public research institutes, as well as all technology companies conducting R&D activities in Hong Kong. The funding ceiling for each project is \$2 million in general and a higher ceiling for individual projects may be considered if necessary and justified. The maximum duration of a project is 12 months. Priority will be given to projects which can be completed within a shorter time frame. The ITC will accord priority when handling the applications.

An ITC spokesman said, "The aim of the call is not only to promote the realisation and commercialisation of local R&D outcomes, but also to encourage the public sector to use technologies for tackling the COVID-19 epidemic in Hong Kong, thereby bearing dual significance."

Further information is available on the website of the Innovation and Technology Fund ([www.itf.gov.hk/l-eng/WhatsNew.asp](http://www.itf.gov.hk/l-eng/WhatsNew.asp)). For enquiries, please contact the Secretariat of the Fund (Tel: 3655 5678; email: [specialpsts@itc.gov.hk](mailto:specialpsts@itc.gov.hk)).