

Worker in Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse preliminarily tested positive for COVID-19

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (July 25) that it had been notified by the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (SSSH) that a worker in the slaughterhouse was preliminarily tested positive for COVID-19. A spokesman for the FEHD said that the operation of the SSSH has not been affected by the incident, and it will strive to ensure that its operation meets the required hygienic and environmental standards, and that all meat supplied to the market is fit for human consumption.

In light of the epidemic development, the stakeholders of the SSSH (including the operator, importers, buyers and transportation companies) have taken the initiative to procure from private medical institutions at their own expense to conduct COVID-19 tests for their employees. One of them has been preliminarily tested positive. The person concerned is responsible for handling livestock sundry duties at the lairage area in the slaughterhouse. He last performed duties on July 23 and has been wearing face masks when performing duties.

The SSSH immediately reported the case to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), and conducted thorough cleaning and disinfection at places where the person concerned had stayed or visited. It has also reminded all workers that if they feel unwell, they should seek medical advice as soon as possible and should not go to work.

According to the CHP, it has immediately followed up on the case upon receiving the notification, and contacted the operator of the SSSH, the worker concerned and his employer for investigation. It has also traced the close contacts of the worker concerned working in the slaughterhouse, and will arrange for the distribution of deep throat saliva specimen bottles to relevant contacts for testing.

The SSSH has attached importance to meeting biosecurity requirements and ensuring good indoor ventilation, and has conducted regular thorough cleaning and disinfection in the slaughterhouse every day according to the daily clearance arrangement. During the epidemic, the SSSH has required all workers to observe the personal protective equipment guidelines, and implemented the following anti-epidemic measures:

- (1) Install two infrared body temperature monitors at the entrance to ensure that only people with normal body temperature are allowed to enter the slaughterhouse;
- (2) Require all people to wear masks when they are in the slaughterhouse;
- (3) Require all people to maintain social distancing and avoid gathering;
- (4) Provide alcohol-based handrub and remind all people to keep their hands

clean; and

(5) Remind all stakeholders to observe personal hygiene, and that if they feel unwell, they should seek medical advice as soon as possible and should not go to work.

The spokesman said, "The Government and the SSSH will endeavour to ensure the smooth operation of the slaughterhouse and that the supply of live pigs will not be affected. According to the current scientific information and advice of the World Health Organization (WHO), it is unlikely that humans will be infected with COVID-19 via food."

The spokesman added, "Nevertheless, the Center for Food Safety, based on the WHO advice on food safety, reminds the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times, including washing hands before and after handling raw and cooked foods; separating raw meat and internal organs from cooked foods; cooking food thoroughly, avoiding to eat raw or undercooked animals, etc so as to ensure food safety."