

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)066

(Question Serial No. 0666)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Donald NG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

It is stated that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will continue to conduct Rodent Activity Survey (RAS) and extend its coverage, enhance and sustain the effectiveness of its rodent control work, and use new rodent control technologies and tools. However, despite the various measures implemented by the Department, the rodent problem has yet to be substantially improved. In this connection, please advise this Committee of the following:

1. How many rodents were caught by the Department in various districts across the territory?
2. What are the details of the new rodent control technologies and tools used by the Department? Have any targets been set in this regard?
3. What are the specific plan and expected results for extending the coverage of the RAS? How will the related data be applied to anti-rodent work?
4. What is the staff establishment involved in carrying out the above work in the coming year?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Kin-por (LegCo internal reference no.: 28)

Reply:

1. The number of live rodents caught by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) in 2024 was 89 629, an increase of around 41% over that in the corresponding period in 2023 (63 344), and around 97% more than that in the corresponding period in 2022 (45 422), showing an enhancement in the effectiveness of anti-rodent work. In the same year, FEHD conducted strategic anti-rodent operations at a total of 97 priority rodent blackspots in all districts and eliminated around 65% of the priority rodent blackspots (63 in total), achieving the indicator of reducing the number of priority rodent blackspots by 60% as set in the 2023 Policy Address. It reflects that the rodent problem has been alleviated.

The number of live rodents caught by FEHD in 2024, with a breakdown by District Council district, is provided in **Annex**.

2&3. The technologies and tools currently used by FEHD for rodent control and their effectiveness are as follows:

Rodent control technology and tool	Effectiveness
Thermal imaging camera surveillance system	FEHD conducted trials on thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence analytical function in 2020 and found it effective in facilitating objective assessment of rodent infestation situation. FEHD has fully adopted thermal imaging cameras for conducting the Rodent Activity Survey (RAS) as a replacement for the Rodent Infestation Survey (RIS) from 2024 onwards to enhance rodent surveillance in districts and deploy more effective anti-rodent actions at locations where the rodent problem is more serious.
Placing poisonous baits in a T-shaped bait box	The bait box was tested between October and November 2020. Test results showed that the T-shaped bait box was more effective than ordinary rectangular bait boxes in attracting rodents to enter and consume the baits. The equipment has been widely employed.
Alcohol rodent trapping device	FEHD has conducted trials progressively on alcohol rodent trapping devices in public markets and refuse collection points since October 2022. The results are positive. The equipment will be used in suitable places as necessary.

Among them, FEHD has fully adopted thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence technology from 2024 onwards for conducting the RAS as a replacement for the RIS. The RAS will be conducted in all districts across the territory once every 6 months. Since January 2025, FEHD has extended the RAS to cover public rental housing estates managed by the Housing Department as well as parks and recreational facilities managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, making the survey more representative. Artificial intelligence will be used in the survey to help analyse the thermal images and identify the presence of rodents. Based on the analysis results, FEHD will enumerate a Rodent Absence Rate (RAR) for the district. The RAR is a useful indicator that enables FEHD to effectively deploy resources and implement targeted rodent prevention and control measures according to the RAS results. Specifically, FEHD will:

- (a) analyse the thermal images captured by thermal imaging cameras at locations with lower RARs to obtain a clear picture of rodents' activities and their dispersal routes at such locations; and
- (b) deploy resources from locations with higher RARs to those with lower RARs, and carry out corresponding measures to strengthen the rodent prevention and control work at the locations concerned, which include:

- (i) redeploying pest control teams to strengthen the daytime rodent prevention and disinfestation work for better resource allocation and efficiency;
- (ii) stepping up rodent trapping operations by overnight rodent control teams at locations with lower RARs;
- (iii) investigating the source of rodent infestation at nearby venues and premises. For premises found to be infested with rodents, FEHD will intervene and, when necessary, deploy its staff to carry out vermin disinfestation operations;
- (iv) providing health education to and taking enforcement actions at nearby food premises and private buildings to ensure proper waste disposal;
- (v) strengthening street cleansing services and combating illegal refuse dumping in the vicinity; and
- (vi) inviting nearby food premises to participate in the scheme of placing large-size waste containers in rear lanes and urging the premises to step up rodent prevention and control, with a view to improving the environmental hygiene of rear lanes.

For the first half of 2024, a total of 90 locations have an RAR below 80%, indicating that rodent activities were more active. Nearly 90% (78) of these locations saw improvement for the second half of the year, with 42 of them achieving an RAR of over 90%. This reflects the fruitful results of the new strategy.

With the use of the above rodent control strategies and other measures, FEHD hopes to achieve the target of reducing the number of 93 rodent black spots by 60% by end-2025.

4. In 2024, there were a total of 745 in-house staff of FEHD and 1 573 staff engaged by the contractors involved in the pest control work, including rodent and mosquito prevention and control. FEHD will adjust the manpower for pest control work according to actual needs and the availability of resources. Therefore, it is difficult to estimate the staff establishment involved in the coming year.

Annex

District	Number of live rodents caught in 2024
Central and Western	4 268
Eastern	5 819
Southern	1 562
Wan Chai	6 360
Kowloon City	5 356
Kwun Tong	5 016
Wong Tai Sin	6 566
Sham Shui Po	8 530
Yau Tsim Mong	14 550
Sha Tin	4 111
Tai Po	2 025
North	3 209
Kwai Tsing	3 917
Tsuen Wan	3 290
Tuen Mun	4 934
Yuen Long	5 528
Sai Kung	1 571
Islands	3 017
Whole territory	89 629

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