

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)070

(Question Serial No. 2237)

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:

Under Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2025-26, it is mentioned that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will continue to conduct Rodent Activity Survey. In this connection, please advise this Committee of:

- (a) the expenditure of the Government on rodent control, the changes and the reasons thereof in the past 5 years;
- (b) the staffing of the Government on rodent control (by permanent and supernumerary posts), the changes and the reasons thereof in the past 5 years;
- (c) the rounds of Rodent Activity Survey conducted and the average expenditure per round in the past 5 years;
- (d) the estimated expenditure for the Anti-rodent Charter, which has been launched by the Department for residential premises since December 2024, and whether resource allocation will be adjusted with regard to the implementation situation to ensure the effectiveness of the initiative; and
- (e) whether the Government has laid down criteria for assessing the findings of Rodent Activity Survey and applied the findings to formulating more effective rodent control strategies?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Wing-yan, JoePHY (LegCo internal reference no.: 35)

Reply:

- (a) In the past 5 financial years (2020-21 to 2024-25), the overall expenditures of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department on pest control services, including rodent and mosquito prevention and control, were \$726 million, \$762 million, \$786 million, \$795 million and \$871 million (revised estimate) respectively. The increase in the overall expenditure was mainly attributable to the adjustment in the expenditures on government staff and outsourced pest control service contracts.
- (b) The staffing involved in pest control work, including rodent and mosquito prevention and control, of the Department in the past 5 years (2020 to 2024) is provided as follows:

Year	Civil service staffing		Total number of staff employed by pest control service contractors
	Planning and implementation of pest control work in districts	Vector surveillance, technical support and advisory work	
2020	740	97	1 680 ^{Note}
2021	745	104	1 718 ^{Note}
2022	745	109	1 977 ^{Note}
2023	745	109	1 860 ^{Note}
2024	745	109	1 573

Note: Excluding positions created under the Anti-epidemic Fund.

- (c) From 2024 onwards, the Department has fully adopted thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence technology for conducting the Rodent Activity Survey (RAS) as a replacement for the Rodent Infestation Survey (RIS). The RAS will be conducted in all districts across the territory once every 6 months. The Department has engaged outsourced contractors for installing and operating thermal imaging cameras as well as using artificial intelligence to help analyse the thermal images captured. The expenditure involved in 2024-25 was about \$12.67 million. The Department does not keep information on the expenditure for the RIS conducted with the conventional baiting method between 2020-21 and 2023-24.
- (d) The Department launched the Anti-rodent Charter (the Charter) for residential premises on 31 December 2024 to raise awareness on maintaining environmental hygiene and cultivate good habits among residents to create a rodent-free environment together. All property management companies/owners' corporations/residents' organisations of private residential premises, the Hong Kong Housing Society, transitional housing, subsidised sales flats and Tenants Purchase Scheme estates may sign up to the Charter. The participants should commit to assigning staff to coordinate anti-rodent efforts in their residential estates or buildings, conveying anti-rodent messages to residents, etc., and they will be provided with free anti-rodent technical support from the Department. The Department will leverage the Charter to enhance the effectiveness of rodent control in private buildings. The relevant work will be absorbed by internal redeployment of resources as necessary and no separate breakdown of the estimated expenditure for the Charter is available.
- (e) Artificial intelligence will be used in the RAS to help analyse the thermal images and identify the presence of rodents. Based on the analysis results, the Department will enumerate a Rodent Absence Rate (RAR) for each district. The RAR is a useful indicator that enables the Department to effectively deploy resources and implement targeted rodent prevention and control measures according to the RAS results. Specifically, the Department will:
- (1) 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

- (2) 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, the Department 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 higher. 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.

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