

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)063

(Question Serial No. 1806)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

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

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

Recently, severe rodent infestations have occurred in food premises, with rodents crawling and gnawing on meat intended for consumption, posing a serious threat to public health and food safety and arousing high public concern. In this connection, please advise this Committee of the following:

- (1) It is stated under the "Food Safety and Public Health" Programme, which is relevant to pest control work, in the Estimates that the estimated expenditure for 2026-27 is 2.3% lower than last year's revised estimate. In the light of the overall reduction in provision, please provide the specific estimated expenditure earmarked for rodent prevention and control in 2026-27, as well as its proportion out of the total expenditure of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.
- (2) The Department will reduce 235 non-directorate posts in 2026-27. Given the downsizing of establishment, please provide the work plan for frontline staff (e.g. pest control staff) to carry out operations for rodent trap nights, inspect baiting points, conduct rodent surveys, etc., in 2026-27. What specific manpower deployment or enhancement measures are in place to ensure adequate manpower support at target biotopes of the Anti-rodent Campaign (e.g. markets, rear lanes)?
- (3) The indicator "poison treatments of rodent infestation" was replaced by "no. of poisonous baiting points inspected and/or serviced". What is the specific reason for this change? How does the new indicator more accurately reflect the effectiveness of rodent control efforts and resource allocation? What are the total quantities of rodent baits and rodent traps planned to be used in 2026?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Pok-chi (LegCo internal reference no.: 1)

Reply:

- (1) In 2026-27, the overall estimated expenditure of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) on pest control services (including rodent and mosquito prevention and control) is \$754 million, accounting for about 6.8% of the total expenditure of FEHD. The expenditure covers not only rodent prevention and control but also the prevention and control of mosquitoes and other arthropod pests with public health

importance. FEHD does not maintain a separate breakdown of the expenditure specifically on rodent prevention and control work.

- (2) In both 2025 and 2026, FEHD maintains 854 in-house staff for performing the pest control work (including rodent and mosquito prevention and control), vector surveillance, technical support and advisory work. Service contractors were also engaged to perform pest control work according to service needs. FEHD is implementing new rodent prevention and control strategies which are data-driven. By leveraging the data obtained from the Rodent Activity Survey, manpower and resources can be deployed to locations with more serious rodent infestation having regard to the risk-based principle, and thus more targeted actions can be taken to enhance the effectiveness of rodent control work. Specifically, the rodent prevention and control measures adopted by FEHD mainly include:
- (a) fully adopting thermal imaging cameras with artificial intelligence technology to monitor rodent infestation situation and formulating the Rodent Absence Rate (RAR). By analysing the spatial and temporal distribution of rodents shown in the thermal images captured by thermal imaging cameras, a clear picture of rodents' activities and their dispersal routes at such locations can be obtained. Resources are deployed from locations with higher RARs to those with lower RARs, so as to plan and implement rodent prevention and control work accordingly and take more effective anti-rodent actions in blackspots, including strengthening overnight rodent operations;
 - (b) taking the initiative to enter private buildings or premises in the vicinity of target locations to investigate the source of rodent infestation. For buildings or premises found to be infested with rodents, FEHD will exercise its statutory power to take actions, including serving "Notice of Elimination of Vermin" on persons responsible for management of the buildings concerned (e.g. incorporated owners and property management companies) or the owners, requesting them to handle the vermin in the common parts of the buildings or in the premises as soon as possible. When necessary, FEHD staff will be deployed to the premises to carry out disinfestation operations. FEHD will also provide health education to food premises near target locations, strengthen street cleansing services and combat illegal refuse dumping in the vicinity;
 - (c) continuing to promote the Anti-rodent Charter and organising the Anti-rodent Partner Awards 2026 to commend proactive organisations and groups which promote anti-rodent work, in order to encourage the establishment of long-term anti-rodent mechanisms, raise residents' awareness on maintaining environmental hygiene and create a rodent-free environment together;
 - (d) continuing to assist the Environment and Ecology Bureau to implement the Cross-sectoral Territory-wide Anti-rodent Action to encourage different sectors in the community, including property management companies, operators of market and hawker stalls, the catering industry, the construction industry and the pest control trade to strengthen anti-rodent work within their respective sectors, and arranging health talks to provide them with information on rodent prevention and control;

- (e) stepping up collaboration with other government departments in rodent prevention and control; and
- (f) continuing to carry out public education and publicity activities to remind the public to eliminate the 3 survival conditions of rodents, namely food, harbourage and passages (i.e. to eliminate the food sources of rodents and block their potential nesting places or passages as soon as possible), and to take heed of the importance of rodent prevention and control.

In recent years, the number of live rodents caught by FEHD has increased, while the number of locations with active rodent activities has decreased. Meanwhile, the expenditure on pest control services has dropped, reflecting the effectiveness of the relevant strategies. FEHD will continue to take forward and enhance the work mentioned above.

- (3) From 2025 onwards, the indicator for placing baits in the Controlling Officer's Report has been changed. The original indicator "poison treatments of rodent infestation in building blocks and other public places" was replaced by the new indicator "no. of poisonous baiting points inspected and/or serviced". The original indicator "poison treatments of rodent infestation in building blocks and other public places" only reflects the number of poison treatment operations for rodent control conducted in building blocks and other public places; however, the service condition of each poison treatment operation, such as the coverage, surveillance time, number of poisonous baits, the frequency to inspect and replace poisonous baits, etc., may vary as influenced by environmental factors. As such, the original indicator cannot effectively reflect the resources deployed by FEHD for poison treatments of rodent infestation. By counting the number of poisonous baiting points in building blocks, the surrounding areas and other public places inspected or serviced by FEHD, the new indicator "no. of poisonous baiting points inspected and/or serviced" can fully reflect the actual work done and resources deployed by FEHD.

The number of poisonous baiting points inspected and/or serviced and the number of rodent trap nights in 2026, as estimated by FEHD, are 3 362 200 and 2 809 000 respectively, which are similar with the actual numbers in 2025. However, the actual numbers are still subject to factors such as the objective environment.

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