

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

Cross-sectoral Territory-wide Anti-rodent Action

Purpose

The paper briefs members on the Government's Cross-sectoral Territory-wide Anti-rodent Action (“各界攜手，全港滅鼠行動”) (“the Action”) which was launched on 28 December 2022 and invite members' views on anti-rodent measures.

Background

2. The Government is committed to enhancing environmental hygiene of Hong Kong, and rodent control is one of our priority areas. The Chief Executive sets in his 2022 Policy Address a performance indicator of reducing the number of priority rodent blackspots at least by half by end-2023. The District Matters Co-ordination Task Force, chaired by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration with the Environment and Ecology Bureau (“EEB”) as the main driving party, has also included rodent infestation as one of the thorny district-based environmental hygiene problems necessitating strengthened co-ordination among departments.

3. The Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene (“ACFEH”) and its Working Group on Application of Technological Solutions for Enhancing Environmental Hygiene have been rendering useful advice to the Government on various environmental hygiene issues. In particular, at the meeting held on 10 January 2022, the ACFEH Working Group discussed rodent control and made a number of recommendations, including the use of new rodent control tools and technologies, enhanced public engagement and publicity, as well as enhanced surveillance of rodent activity, etc. A summary of the major views given are at the **Annex**. EEB and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (“FEHD”) have taken into account the advice and suggestions in formulating our anti-rodent strategies and measures, including the launch of the Action.

The Action

4. Recognising that effective rodent control necessitates cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary and community-wide efforts, EEB launched the Action on 28 December 2022 which aims to engage relevant sectors of the community and members of the public in strengthening anti-rodent work in collaboration with the Government. Under the Action, relevant bureaux/departments (“B/Ds”) and various sectors (such as property management, food and catering, market management and construction site management, etc.) take premises-specific and targeted anti-rodent measures as well as raise public awareness in rodent prevention through elimination of the food sources and hiding places of rodents, as well as blocking their dispersal routes.

Concerted efforts of B/Ds

FEHD

5. FEHD has been piloting and implementing new rodent control strategies. On surveillance, it is making wider use of thermal cameras to monitor rodent activity and assess the effectiveness of rodent control work; and is working with a local university to formulate a composite rodent infestation index for surveillance. On prevention and control, FEHD has formed 19 overnight rodent control roving teams since July 2022, and has been applying new tools such as T-shape bait boxes and glue traps in suitable locations, etc. It has been conducting targeted operations, such as the Strategic Anti-rodent Operations which target priority rodent blackspots; and the recently-launched annual Year-end Clean-up Campaign. Since November 2022, FEHD has implemented a trial scheme under which licensed food premises are allowed to place large refuse bins at their rear lanes under specified conditions for proper temporary storage of refuse pending collection by cleaning workers hired by the food premises, with a view to improving environmental hygiene and mitigating rodent infestation problems in rear lanes.

6. Targeting the rodent problems in markets and fixed-pitch hawker areas, FEHD has continued to implement deep cleaning operations at its markets and extended the intensive anti-rodent operations to all markets and fixed-pitch hawker areas. FEHD has also introduced a new licensing condition¹ in fresh

¹ The new licensing condition stipulates that unless prior written approval for an alternative arrangement has been obtained from the FEHD, all fresh/chilled/frozen meat or poultry to be delivered to the licensed fresh provision shops for sale, no matter whether the meat or poultry is pre-packaged, must be directly delivered into the premises, and at no time be left or kept outside the premises (including any street, pavement, alley, passageway, and space) pending further handling or sale. Even if an alternative arrangement is approved, the meat or poultry must at all times be properly kept and protected to prevent from the invasion or contamination by the ambient environment or pest.

provision shops licences to strengthen the regulations on their handling of meat and poultry to prevent contamination by the ambient environment or pest.

7. In November 2022, FEHD promulgated the code of practice and checklists² for rodent control for B/Ds and other relevant sectors. It will continue to provide them with guidelines, advice and training as necessary. FEHD is also planning to exchange views with Mainland experts on rodent control measures; as well as engaging private pest control contractors to bring in new ideas in rodent prevention and management in three selected public markets.

8. The Home Affairs Department and the FEHD also work in concert in assisting residents of “three-nil” buildings to tackle rodent problem, with the former providing over 490 times one-off cleaning services to the common parts of some 480 "three-nil" buildings in 2022, and the latter stepping up street cleaning and pest control services at public places in their vicinity. Trial scheme of including anti-rodent services in the one-off cleaning services to the common parts has been launched in four districts (Sham Shui Po, Yau Tsim Mong, Sha Tin and Southern) and it will also be rolled out in the Kowloon City district in February 2023.

9. Through a multi-pronged approach, the total number of dead rodents collected and live rodents caught by FEHD from July to December 2022 was 42,114, around 20% more than that of January to June 2022 (35,118), and around 18% more than that in the corresponding period in 2021 (35,812). The number of live rodents caught during the second half of 2022 was 27,728, an increase of around 57% over that in the first half of 2022 (17,694), and around 50% more than the corresponding period in 2021 (18,459).

Housing Department (HD)

10. HD has continued to conduct intensified anti-rodent operations in 80 priority estates each year; and will continue to implement targeted rodent prevention and control measures for its public rental housing estates by making reference to the latest guidelines and code of practice issued by FEHD, including installing more rodent proofing and rodent disinfestation facilities, placing additional rodenticides at specific locations, procuring additional services from pest control companies, as well as strengthening patrol and enforcement actions against the misdeeds of illegal animal feeding.

² FEHD’s code of practice and checklists are available on its webpage: https://www.fehd.gov.hk/tc_chi/pestcontrol/Code_of_Practice_on_Rodent_Management.html

Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)

11. LCSD venues cover parks and playgrounds, sitting-out areas, sports grounds, swimming pools, beaches, cultural venues, etc. It will continue to follow FEHD's guidelines in devising tailor-made anti-rodent plans for its venues; and will strengthen rodent-related inspections of its venues, especially those areas that are covered by vegetation. Inspection staff will pay attention to any signs of rodent infestation, such as excrement and suspected rodent holes, etc., and professional pest control service contractors will be engaged for enhanced rodent control work if needed. LCSD will also continue to seek technical advice from FEHD and conduct joint operations for situations with severe rodent infestation problem where necessary.

Other B/Ds

12. B/Ds have undertaken to establish an effective communication and monitoring system, as well as to launch enhanced anti-rodent measures in premises under their respective management. Specifically, they will, among other things, –

- (a) follow FEHD's guidelines, code of practice and checklists for proactively tackling rodents at venues under their management;
- (b) set up an internal audit team to monitor rodent control work;
- (c) put in place a monitoring and feedback system to assess the results and achievements on anti-rodent work;
- (d) keep proper monthly statistics on anti-rodent measures under the premises/locations managed by the respective B/Ds and share with FEHD for proactive collaboration;
- (e) designate a co-ordinator at headquarters (at Assistant Director-level or equivalent) to facilitate high-level liaison between B/Ds and FEHD on rodent control; and
- (f) step up publicity and education campaigns and engagements with stakeholders under respective purview to promote the importance of rodent prevention and control work.

Efforts from community sectors

13. EEB has also secured the support of stakeholders from various sectors, including those from property management, market and hawker associations, food and catering, construction and the pest control sector, etc., to work hand in

hand with the Government in eliminating rodents' fundamental survival conditions of food, harbourage and passages in their respective premises.

14. For example, on elimination of food sources of rodents, EEB has secured the support of the Federation of Hong Kong Kowloon New Territories Hawker Associations and stall operators in promoting proper storage of unsold food items in enclosed plastic boxes in markets after business. Support from the catering sector has also been obtained for the trial scheme of allowing licensed food premises to place large enclosed refuse bins at specified rear lanes as mentioned in paragraph 5 above.

15. On elimination of the harbourage of rodents, various sectors, including the property management, construction, market and hawker associations, food and catering sectors, etc. will remind their sector players to make reference to FEHD's guidelines and avoid accumulation of articles, junk or building materials which would provide harbourage for rodents. Property management companies are also advised to use cement or metal plates to properly seal openings left in walls, floors or roofs, etc. On blocking of rodent passages, the property management sector will, in accordance with FEHD's guidelines, install rodent proofing facilities, such as rat guards around pipes on external walls, wire meshes with apertures to screen exhaust fans and ventilation louvers, as well as gratings with apertures or plug barbed wire balls at the opening of pipes, etc.

Public Engagement, Publicity and Enforcement

16. To publicise the importance of rodent control among students and the public at large, FEHD will co-organise a video-taking competition with the Education Bureau for students on environmental hygiene matters, including rodent prevention. Details of the competition will be released in due course.

17. EEB has also set up a thematic webpage³ under the Action to disseminate information to the public. B/Ds and organisations from the relevant sectors will also make use of various channels including social media to promote anti-rodent measures and reach out to the public on how they could help to control and prevent rodent infestation.

18. On enforcement, FEHD has issued a total of around 42,000 fixed penalty notices and initiated around 1,900 prosecutions last year, targeting situations such as causing poor environmental hygiene conditions, food preparation and scullery at rear lanes, and improper storage of articles and illegal dumping of refuse. Separately, as elaborated in ACFEH paper 1/2023, the

³ The thematic webpage is available on:
https://www.eeb.gov.hk/food/en/our_work/eh2.html

Government has proposed to raise the level of fixed penalty for public cleanliness and obstruction offences for enhancing deterrent effect against, among others, littering and depositing of waste which could provide food and harbourage for rodents.

Advice Sought

19. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and provide views on rodent control measures.

**Environment and Ecology Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
January 2023**

**ACFEH Working Group on Application of Technological
Solutions for Enhancing Environmental Hygiene**

**Major Comments on Rodent Control Made
at the Meeting on 10 January 2022**

Surveillance

- Motion sensors and cameras with Internet-of-Thing function should be installed in waste collection points or rodent blackspots to enhance monitoring of rodent activity.
- Rodent statistics should be collated and analysed for identifying patterns of rodent activity and assessment of effectiveness of anti-rodent measures.

Prevention and control

- Large-scale anti-rodent operations should be considered in view of the extensive media attention on rodent problems.
- The private sector should be engaged to enhance rodent control work, e.g. in the use of new tools and technologies.
- Public engagement and publicity on rodent control should be enhanced.
- Regular testing of the effectiveness of different rodenticides should be conducted.