

For information

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Anti-rodent Campaign 2006

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the Anti-rodent Campaign 2006 led by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD).

Background

2. Rodents are harmful pests that can cause physical damage to properties and contaminate foodstuff. They can also transmit a number of diseases, such as plague, leptospirosis, hantaviral diseases, scrub typhus, urban typhus and spotted fever. The table at **Annex 1** shows the number of reported cases on rodent-borne diseases found in Hong Kong between 2000 and 2005. Sustained and concerted efforts from all sectors of the community are necessary to contain the harm and nuisance that rodents can bring about.

3. The FEHD, being the rodent control authority in Hong Kong, carries out regular inspections and anti-rodent measures throughout the territory. In addition, FEHD has been holding anti-rodent campaigns on an annual basis. Each campaign features specific target areas where dedicated rodent control, publicity and educational efforts are made by relevant government departments. Market complexes, construction sites, food premises, residential buildings and cargo handling areas were the target areas for the past five years. Shopping centres (including their peripheries) are the target areas for the anti-rodent campaign in 2005. These campaigns have proven instrumental in reducing the rodent population and enhancing public awareness of the significance of rodent prevention in the community and the target areas in particular.

Anti-rodent Campaign 2006

4. To sustain governmental and community efforts on the prevention and control of rodent problems, FEHD will launch a new round of anti-rodent campaign on 9 December 2005. Similar to previous campaigns, the Anti-rodent Campaign 2006 seeks to maximize its impact through concerted efforts of relevant government departments. Under the stewardship of FEHD, the 20 members of the Inter-departmental Working Group on Pest Prevention and Control (membership list at **Annex 2**) will participate actively in the planning and launching of the Campaign. They make dedicated efforts to monitor and eliminate rodent infestation in venues/sites under their charge and help disseminate anti-rodent messages to the community through their networks.

Target Areas

5. Rural areas with visitors such as hiking trails as well as villages and their peripheries are the target areas in this interdepartmental and territory-wide anti-rodent campaign. Rural areas with greater human activities like villages could be foci of rodent infestation as food for the pest could be readily available. According to the March 2005 issue of the Public Health and Epidemiology Bulletin published by the Department of Health, rodent-borne diseases such as scrub typhus, spotted fever and urban typhus reported locally during the past ten years (1995 to 2004) were closely related¹ with outdoor activities, e.g. trail walking, jogging or camping in rural areas.

6. In the campaign, focus will be given to villages and hiking trails, particularly those with recurrent rodent problems. Rear lanes/sides lanes or vacant lands with rodent problems adjacent to villages would also be covered. Attention would be given to facilities and structures such as goods handling areas, flowerbeds, market/hawker sites, common areas and refuse collection points that are highly susceptible to rodent harbourages as well. Relevant departments will also be requested to provide information on actions taken in controlling the rodent problems.

¹ The correlation for scrub typhus, spotted fever and urban typhus were 54%, 51% and 10% respectively.

Pilot Study

7. During the Campaign, the FEHD will conduct a pilot study on selected villages to test out programmes to eliminate rodent infestation. It is learnt in Hungary that rodent-free condition is achievable and sustainable in low-rise urban areas with comprehensive rodent control programme. The approach adopted in Hungary took advantage of the territorial and neophobic behaviour of rodents since the animal normally live within a territory bounded by physical barrier such as roads, exposed open spaces, playgrounds, etc. Successfully preventing rodents from invading into an area where they have been eliminated would maintain the area free from rodent. To maintain the rodent-free situation, a long-term monitoring and permanent baiting programme is established immediately after the initial rodent disinfections operation.

8. Borrowing the Hungary experience, pest control staff of FEHD will conduct comprehensive rodent control actions in the selected areas by applying poisonous baits in the entire area. The rodent infestation rate in the areas will be monitored for 12 months and maintained at low level by rodent control measures including environmental hygiene improvement, poisonous baiting, installation of rodent proofing measures, etc. Regular evaluation would be conducted to review the rodent situation. If the pilot study shows promise, the protocol and experience of the programme can be promoted to the public, estate management bodies and other government departments.

Slogan and Phrases

9. The well accepted slogan of “Prevent Disease Eliminate Rodent Nuisance” (“防鼠工作做得好 鼠患問題自然冇”) will continue to be used in the Anti-rodent Campaign 2006. The Campaign will feature a promotion phase (4 weeks from 9 December 2005 to 5 January 2006) and an enhancement phase (4 weeks from 10 July 2006 to 5 August 2006).

10. The promotion phase (9.12.2005 – 5.1.2006) aims to –

- (i) arouse the awareness of village representatives, villagers/residents of villages and rural area visitors such as

hikers on the importance of rodent prevention and control measures; and

- (ii) reduce the rodent population in the territory, particularly in villages and their surroundings.

11. The enhancement phase (10.7.2006 – 5.8.2006) aims to –

- (i) enhance rodent control work in villages and their surroundings with persistent rodent problems; and
- (ii) reinforce rodent prevention messages.

Community Participation

12. Rodent prevention and control cannot be efficiently and effectively carried out without active community participation. It is essential to arouse community awareness of rodent problems and to mobilize community resources to control such problems. To this end, a series of publicity and education activities will be organized under the 2006 Campaign, including exhibition at FEHD's Health Education Exhibition and Resource Centre, theme talks and seminars on rodent proofing measures and paying house visits by FEHD pest control staff. Through Announcement of Public Interests (APIs) on radio and television, posters, pamphlets, banners, FEHD's homepage, the public and the target groups will be reminded of the importance of rodent prevention and control measures. District Councils also render support to the campaign by organizing anti-rodent activities at district levels.

Evaluation

13. At present, FEHD conducts the rodent infestation survey in selected locations for monitoring the rodent problem in the territory regularly. To assess the effectiveness of the pilot study, evaluation would be conducted by the FEHD before the operation commenced as well as 3 months and 12 months after the study started. The evaluation

would be carried out by means of test baiting and questionnaires which give a comprehensive picture on the overall rodent situation of the selected villages.

Advice Sought

14. Members are invited to note on the work plan of the Anti-rodent Campaign 2006 and the pilot study on maintaining rodent-free status for rural villages.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
November 2005

Annex 1

Number of reported cases on rodent-borne diseases

Disease Year	Plague	Urban typhus	Leptospirosis	Hantaviral disease	Scrub Typhus	Spotted fever
2000	0	2	1	2	2	8
2001	0	4	1	2	3	9
2002	0	5	2	0	8	9
2003	0	1	1	1	13	9
2004	0	6	6	3	12	17
2005 (Jan-Sept)	0	7	4	2	21	9

**Membership of the Inter-departmental Working Group on
Pest Prevention and Control**

Education and Manpower Bureau

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Architectural Services Department

Buildings Department

Correctional Services Department

Drainage Services Department

Environmental Protection Department

Government Logistics Department

Department of Health

Highways Department

Home Affairs Department

Housing Department

Immigration Department

Labour Department

Lands Department

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Marine Department

Social Welfare Department

Water Supplies Department

Hospital Authority