

Chapter 9

Food Safety, Environmental Hygiene, Agriculture and Fisheries

Hong Kong has in place a broad range of tools, facilities and strict rules to ensure that food consumed in the city is safe — important safeguards for a city that imports 95 per cent of its foodstuffs. Environmental hygiene is also maintained strictly to protect public health and improve living quality.

Organisational Framework

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) is responsible for drawing up policies on food safety, environmental hygiene, animal health, and matters concerning agriculture and fisheries in Hong Kong. It also allocates resources for carrying out these policies and works closely with three departments: the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Government Laboratory (GL) in these areas.

The FEHD is tasked with ensuring that food sold in Hong Kong is safe for human consumption and that environmental hygiene standards are high.

The AFCD is responsible for implementing policies governing the agricultural and fisheries industries and for helping them to stay competitive by providing them with infrastructural and technical support such as market facilities and animal disease diagnostic services. The department also administers loans to them and advises the Government on animal health matters.

The GL provides testing services to support the regular food surveillance programme as well as urgent food incidents handled by the FEHD's Centre for Food Safety (CFS).

Public Cleansing Services

The FEHD provides services for street cleansing, household waste collection and public toilets. All streets are swept between one and eight times a day, depending on their condition. For main thoroughfares, flyovers and high-speed roads, mechanised cleansing is provided. In 2011, about 76 per cent of street cleansing services were outsourced. The FEHD and its contractors provide regular washing and

flushing services for heavily used pavements, hawker blackspots and market areas. Additional cleansing services are provided where necessary to maintain environmental cleanliness and hygiene.

Collection of household waste is carried out all year round. In 2011, about 74 per cent of waste collection services were outsourced and about 5 160 tonnes of household waste were collected daily by the FEHD and its contractors.

The FEHD provides toilet attendants at heavily used public toilets. In 2011, about 41 per cent of public toilets were serviced by toilet attendants. 12 public toilets were refurbished and 80 aqua privies were converted to flushing toilets in an ongoing drive to improve such facilities.

The FEHD takes enforcement action against people who cause environmental hygiene problems in public places by littering, spitting, and other unhygienic practices. In 2011, the FEHD issued some 35 100 fixed penalty notices.

Abatement of Sanitary Nuisances

To deal with sanitary nuisances such as refuse accumulation, water dripping from air-conditioners and water seepage in private premises, the FEHD issues Nuisance Notices requiring those responsible to stop the nuisances. Those who fail to comply with the notices are prosecuted. During the year, the FEHD issued 3 593 such notices and initiated 91 prosecutions.

Pest Control

Preventing the spread of pest-borne diseases is one of FEHD's prime tasks. The department reviews constantly the methodology and strategy for controlling the spread of pests. Anti-rodent and anti-mosquito campaigns are carried out across Hong Kong annually to urge people to help stop the spread of these pests.

The department maintains close surveillance of *Aedes albopictus*, a major carrier of dengue fever in Hong Kong. Anti-mosquito teams conducted about 834 000 inspections of likely mosquito breeding spots and eliminated about 47 000 such spots during the year.

Cemeteries and Crematoria

The FEHD operates six government crematoria, 11 public cemeteries and eight public columbaria, and monitors the management of 28 private cemeteries.

The FEHD promotes environmentally friendly and sustainable ways of handling cremains and alternative ways of paying tribute to the deceased. The Government encourages scattering of cremains in the eight Gardens of Remembrance managed by the FEHD.

The FEHD, provides a free service for scattering cremains at sea, and will be using a bigger boat to carry out such burials to serve the increasing number of families opting for the service. The FEHD also provides an Internet Memorial Service (IMS) for the public to pay homage to the deceased and their families through a

dedicated webpage (www.memorial.gov.hk). This service is also available through mobile phone (m.memorial.gov.hk).

Columbaria

The FEHD is building a new columbarium and a garden of remembrance at the Wo Hop Shek cemetery to meet public demand. In addition, the Government has identified 24 potential sites across the territory for columbarium development in different districts.

Responding to the public's call for enhancing the regulation of private columbaria, the FHB put forward in December 2011 a proposed licensing scheme for public consultation.

Licensing of Food Premises and Other Trades

The FEHD is the licensing authority for food businesses. It also issues permits for the sale of restricted foods, including Chinese herbal tea, milk, frozen confections, sushi and sashimi, as well as licences for places of public entertainment such as theatres, cinemas and entertainment machine centres. It issues licences for private swimming pools, commercial bathhouses as well as for factories engaged in offensive trades such as slaughtering of food animals. The FEHD provides executive and secretarial support to the Liquor Licensing Board, an independent statutory body that issues liquor licences, including those for clubs.

During the year, the FEHD handled 3 260 applications for food business licences, 893 permits for restricted foods, 1 558 licences for places of public entertainment, 35 licences for other trades, 930 liquor and club liquor licences, and 19 permits for karaoke establishments in premises with restaurant licences.

The FEHD continues to streamline licensing procedures in line with the Government's policy of facilitating business operations in Hong Kong. Since mid-March 2011, it has been accepting nominations of single persons to act as hygiene managers and/or hygiene supervisors of food stalls in supermarkets or food courts which operate under one licence. This measure reduces business compliance costs.

In June 2011, the FEHD shortened to eight days, from 20 days, the time needed to process applications for live broadcasts in licensed cinemas.

During the year, the FHB conducted a public consultation exercise to gauge public views on the regulation of upstairs bars and further streamlining of licensing procedures. The Government will map out the way forward after analysing the views received.

Food Safety and Labelling

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) established within the FEHD is responsible for ensuring that food sold in Hong Kong is safe for human consumption.

Under the food surveillance programme, about 64 900 samples of food were taken at import, wholesale and retail points in 2011 for chemical, microbiological

and radiological testing as part of the work of ensuring food safety. The overall satisfactory rate of these tests was 99.7 per cent in 2011.

A total of 28 836 vehicles carrying vegetables, and 41 198 vehicles carrying live food animals including pigs, cattle, goats and poultry were inspected at the Food Control Office and Animal Inspection Station at Man Kam To during the year. A total of 5 052 263 live food animals were examined and 46 953 blood and 54 715 urine, faecal and tissue samples were tested for disease and veterinary drug residues.

During the year, the CFS continued its review of the regulatory framework for the control of pesticide and veterinary drug residues in food. The FHB and CFS consulted the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene of the Legislative Council on the Proposed Regulatory Framework on Pesticide Residues in Food in Hong Kong in July 2011, and conducted a public consultation on the framework from July to September 2011.

The regulation governing nutrition labelling requires prepackaged foods, unless exempted, to carry labels that provide information about energy and specified nutrients. The regulation also specifies the conditions for making nutrition claims. The new regulation enables consumers to make informed choices, regulates misleading or deceptive labels and nutrition claims and encourages food producers to apply sound nutrition principles in the preparation of foodstuffs.

In 2011, the CFS conducted visual checks on 5 048 prepackaged food products to ensure they complied with the statutory '1+7' nutrition-labelling requirements. A total of 503 food samples were taken for chemical analysis to verify the nutrition information and nutrition claim. The overall compliance rate was 98.47 per cent.

The Food Safety Ordinance came into effect on August 1, 2011. It provides a food-tracing mechanism to help the Government trace food sources more effectively and to deal quickly with food incidents. It includes a registration scheme for food importers and food distributors and a record keeping requirement relating to the acquisitions and supplies of food by food traders. There is a six-month grace period for the two requirements, both of which will end on January 31, 2012.

As a 'World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Risk Analysis of Chemicals in Food', the CFS has a commitment to help improve world public health and food safety through research, professional exchanges, capacity building and participation in emergency responses. In June 2011, the CFS organised a regional symposium for food regulators, academics, traders and consumers to share their experiences and exchange views on the handling of food incidents.

Measures against Avian Influenza

Hong Kong implements a series of measures to keep avian influenza at bay. These include stringent monitoring of farms and markets, vaccination of chickens and close surveillance of imported and local birds in Hong Kong.

Under an agreement with the Mainland, all poultry (except pigeons) imported from there have to be vaccinated against H5 avian influenza, commonly known as

bird flu. Government veterinarians also visit registered Mainland farms regularly to ensure that the poultry they export to Hong Kong are healthy.

Keeping chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons, quails and other poultry in backyards is prohibited. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000. People who kept poultry as pets before the ban are required to have exemption permits to continue keeping them. Owners of racing pigeons are required to have exhibition licences.

Pet bird traders are required to submit to the health authorities official health certificates, or documents such as invoices showing the places of origin of their birds, or the names and addresses of their suppliers. Sale of birds from unknown sources is prohibited. Bird traders must also keep up-to-date records of their transactions and the number of birds in their possession.

To prevent virus from accumulating in retail outlets, the Government continues to enforce the Food Business (Amendment) Regulation 2008 which states that all poultry in public market stalls and fresh provision shops must be slaughtered by 8 pm every day and that live poultry are not allowed in these premises between 8 pm and 5 am the next day.

Live poultry retailers are also required to observe a set of strict safety rules. They must ensure that people working in retail outlets wear protective clothing and report immediately to the FEHD any dead poultry found. They must not overstock live poultry in their premises and must affix acrylic panels to their poultry cages to prevent direct contact between customers and the poultry. They are also responsible for preventing customers from touching live poultry.

All live poultry consignments entering Hong Kong have to be tested for avian influenza before being released to their importers.

To monitor avian influenza efficiently, blood samples and/or faecal swabs are collected regularly from poultry farms, wholesale and retail markets, from healthy, sick or dead birds for testing. The same is done with birds kept in recreation parks, pet shops, and wild birds in wetlands and elsewhere. The Government also provides a round-the-clock service for collecting sick and dead wild birds. In 2011, some 9 800 dead wild birds were received by the AFCD, of which 10 were confirmed to be H5-infected. A quick, real-time method of testing samples for avian influenza, known as Real-Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR), is used in Hong Kong.

Long-term precautionary measures require poultry farms to keep proper farm management records, enhance cleaning and disinfection facilities, segregate the functions relating to the rearing of breeder flocks and broiler flocks, and to install metal nets to prevent small birds from entering farm sheds.

In 2011, there were 30 chicken farms in Hong Kong with a total maximum rearing capacity of 1.3 million birds.

The AFCD runs a training programme for staff that carry out poultry culling and conducts culling drills annually.

During the year, the Government suspended temporarily the importation of chilled or frozen poultry meat and poultry products from a number of overseas places with avian influenza outbreaks.

More than 19 000 birds at the Cheung Sha Wan Temporary Wholesale Poultry Market were culled in December 2011 after a chicken carcass was found there to have the H5N1 virus. The Government suspended the delivery of all live poultry to the market for 21 days as a result.

The Government also imposed in end-December 2011 a 21-day suspension of imports of live poultry and poultry products (including chilled and frozen poultry, and poultry eggs) from an import control zone in Shenzhen after a man there was found to be infected by the H5N1.

Monitoring of Influenza Virus in Pigs

The Government monitors the occurrence of influenza in pigs. The AFCD monitors closely the health of pigs in Hong Kong and reminds local pig farmers regularly to maintain good farm and personal hygiene. The FEHD also examines imported live pigs and constantly reminds slaughterhouse staff and others who have physical contact with live pigs in the slaughterhouses to wear masks and other protective gear. CFS literature on food safety includes advice on the handling and cooking of food, particularly pork.

Public Markets and Cooked Food Markets

The FEHD operates 102 public markets, including 25 free-standing cooked food markets, providing some 14 400 stalls that sell fresh and cooked food as well as household items. As at the end of 2011, the occupancy rate at these markets was 87.6 per cent.

The FEHD received some 1 600 applications from market stall operators wishing to join its one-off Tenancy Transfer Scheme, designed to regularise the status of public market stall operators. A total of 1 487 applications were approved.

Hawkers

The FEHD regulates hawking in Hong Kong. At the end of 2011, there were 6 480 hawkers carrying out business in licensed fixed pitch stalls and 505 itinerant hawkers.

Slaughterhouses

The FEHD oversees the hygiene standards of licensed slaughterhouses in Sheung Shui, Tsuen Wan and Cheung Chau.

During the year, 39 067 animal health certificates and 9 217 entry permits for local pigs were verified at the slaughterhouses, and 52 253 samples of urine and tissue were taken from animals for the monitoring of veterinary drug residues at the three slaughterhouses. A total of 1 556 571 pigs, 28 591 cattle and 13 011 goats

were slaughtered at the three facilities. Meat supplied by the slaughterhouses has to pass inspection by health officials before delivery to markets.

The FEHD's Intelligence Unit continued to track down vendors selling chilled meat as fresh meat, and joined forces with the Customs and Excise Department and the Hong Kong Police regularly to curb meat smuggling. In 2011, they carried out a total of 43 raids, made 38 prosecutions and seized 12 tonnes of smuggled meat. The crackdown also resulted in termination of one market stall tenancy.

Public Education

The FEHD runs a Health Education Exhibition and Resource Centre in Kowloon Park, Tsim Sha Tsui, to create greater public understanding of food safety and environmental hygiene.

During the year, the centre organised 2 775 health talks for the general public and target groups, including food handlers, school children, the elderly and ethnic minorities. A motor vehicle was also used as a mobile education centre to help drive home the food safety and environmental hygiene message.

On food safety, the CFS has a Communication Resource Unit in the Fa Yuen Street Municipal Services Building in Mong Kok that organises food safety programmes and provides technical support to people in the food trade and the public.

The CFS invites food trade associations and licensed food premises to be signatories to a Food Safety Charter drawn up to promote good, safety practices in the handling of foods. In 2011-12, a total of 21 food trade associations and over 2 200 food premises and retail outlets signed up to the charter.

The CFS conducted 153 health talks on food safety during the year. It also employed two vans to broadcast food safety messages to people in housing estates, markets and in different districts.

In 2011, the CFS launched a two-year enhanced programme to promote nutrition labelling while it continued its work on educating and motivating people to pay more attention to nutrition labels to help them make suitable food choices.

Primary Production

Hong Kong's agriculture and fisheries industries are relatively small. They do not receive Government subsidies, but are assisted by the Government in improving the quality of their output, their productivity and competitiveness.

The combined output of the two industries in 2011 was worth \$3.26 billion. Vegetables accounted for 3 per cent; cut flowers, 28 per cent; live pigs, 7 per cent; live poultry, 58 per cent; freshwater fish, 4 per cent; and local seafood, 25 per cent. Some 16 400 people were employed directly in these industries in 2011.

Agricultural Industry

Hong Kong's agricultural industry focuses mainly on producing quality fresh food crops through intensive land use. Farming is done mostly in the New Territories, but only 2 per cent of New Territories land is being used for growing crops, comprising mainly vegetables and cut flowers. Their combined output in 2011 was valued at about \$228 million. Pigs and poultry are the principal food animals reared. In 2011, locally reared pigs earned about \$285 million, while poultry, including chickens and chicken eggs, earned about \$228 million.

To stay in business, Hong Kong's agricultural industry has to adapt to fast changing market trends as it is constrained by the limited supply of farm land and labour, competition from imports, high cost of maintaining environmental standards and calls for improved farm hygiene and safe produce.

The AFCD encourages crop farmers to tap niche markets and to sharpen their competitiveness by cultivating safe and good quality vegetables. The department works with local organic farming groups and the Vegetable Marketing Organisation to promote organic farming and to develop a market for organic vegetables. The department provides an organic farming support service to 182 farms located on about 69 hectares of land. The AFCD also promotes the use of greenhouse technology for intensive high-value crop production.

During the year, five improved varieties of vegetable and fruit: mini wax gourd, yellow rind/red flesh watermelon, yellow cucumber, Chinese cabbage and sweet potato, were introduced to farmers for cultivation in Hong Kong. The voluntary Accredited Farm Scheme managed by the AFCD and the Vegetable Marketing Organisation have been providing a stable supply of high quality and safe vegetables since 1994. Apart from Guangdong, the scheme was extended to the Ningxia Autonomous Region in 2011. A total of 296 farms, spread over 2 760 hectares of land, have been accredited under the scheme so far.

Leisure farms have become popular places for recreation in recent years. In collaboration with the local agricultural sector, AFCD published a book entitled *Guide to Hong Kong Leisure Farms 2011* and created a website (http://fedvmcs.org/farm_index.php) to help visitors explore a variety of leisure farms in Hong Kong.

Fisheries Industry

Fresh fish is one of Hong Kong's most important primary products. In 2011, fish caught and fish reared in ponds and floating cages at sea amounted to about 174 000 tonnes. Their combined value was \$2.51 billion.

Hong Kong's fishing fleet consists of some 4 030 vessels, manned by about 8 500 local fishermen and some 4 800 Mainland deckhands. The predominant fishing method is trawling, which accounted for 82 per cent of fish caught, weighing about 140 000 tonnes. Other methods include lining, gill netting and purse-seining. The total catch in 2011 weighed 171 000 tonnes and had an estimated wholesale value of \$2.36 billion. The industry provided some 46 000 tonnes of fish for local consumption during the year.

Under licence issued by the AFCD, 1 015 mariculturists operate in 26 designated fish culture zones. They supplied the market with about 1 185 tonnes of live marine fish valued at \$94 million in 2011.

Freshwater and brackish water fish are reared in fish ponds, most of which are located in the northwestern part of the New Territories. With the increasing urbanisation of the New Territories, commercial production of pond fish has declined gradually. Pond fish culture yielded some 2 315 tonnes of fish, or 4 per cent of local freshwater fish consumption in 2011.

The AFCD continued to combat destructive fishing practices to promote sustainable development of the fishing industry and to conserve fisheries resources in Hong Kong waters. A total of 13 cases of illegal fishing were successfully prosecuted in 2011.

In addition, the AFCD continued to assist fishermen to switch to sustainable modes of operation. Credit facilities were provided for fishermen to switch to sustainable fisheries, or related operations, and for fish farmers to develop their aquaculture business. The department also helped fishermen cope with the annual fishing moratorium in the South China Sea imposed by the Mainland authorities by providing them with technical support, liaison services and credit facilities. To equip fishermen with the skills and knowledge to switch to sustainable modes of operation, the AFCD organised free-of-charge training courses during the fishing moratorium in 2011.

The legislation for banning trawling in Hong Kong waters will come into effect on December 31, 2012 to restore Hong Kong's seabed and depleted fisheries resources. The Government is introducing a package of measures to help trawler fishermen affected by the ban. Affected trawler fishermen will be paid ex-gratia allowances, affected local deckhands will receive one-off grants, and affected owners of inshore trawlers can join a voluntary buy-out scheme.

The Government will also introduce a training programme to assist affected trawler fishermen and local deckhands in acquiring skills to enable them to switch to other sustainable modes of operation such as mariculture and recreational fishing. The AFCD will also use some of the bought-out trawlers as artificial reefs, to help rehabilitate fishery resources in Hong Kong waters.

To complement the trawl ban, the Government is proposing additional fisheries management measures to be included in the amendment to the Fisheries Protection Ordinance. These measures include: (1) the setting up of a registration system for local fishing vessels; (2) limiting new entrants to control the number of fishing vessels and fishing effort; (3) restricting the fishing activities of non-fishing vessels and prohibiting fishing by non-local fishing vessels; and (4) designating fisheries protection areas.

The AFCD conducts studies and provides technical services to fish farmers to strengthen the aquacultural industry's sustainability. The department continues to

implement a fish health management programme to help fish farmers prevent, diagnose and contain fish disease to minimise loss.

The AFCD implements a 'Good Aquaculture Practices Programme' to enhance fish farm management. Under the programme, AFCD staff visit fish farms regularly to collect water and fish samples for analysis. Seminars are held for farmers to learn new techniques and good management practices. The department also continues searching for new fish species that have market potential to introduce to local fish farmers.

The AFCD's 'Accredited Fish Farm Scheme' continues to work well. This voluntary scheme was set up to strengthen the aquacultural industry's competitiveness. Participants are required to adopt good practices to raise their farms' hygiene standards and fish quality. Tests, including analyses of drug residues and heavy metals in fish, are conducted to ensure the cultured fish are safe to eat before they are sold. A total of 105 farms have joined the scheme so far.

Together, they sold over 12 000 kilogrammes of the accredited fish, comprising pompano, grey mullets, green groupers, star snappers, skewband grunts, red snappers, red drum, mangrove snapper and black spotted croakers in 2011. The accredited fish carry tags bearing the scheme's label, 'Accredited Fish Farm Scheme', for easy recognition. The AFCD works with the Fish Marketing Organisation to encourage the industry to develop quality brand names.

Continuous efforts have been made by the AFCD to promote the development of local fish hatcheries and nurseries. A number of workshops on induced spawning and fry production of Jade Perch was held in 2011 to help fish farmers acquire the necessary techniques.

Specially designed artificial reefs known as biofilters are used to improve water quality and seabed conditions at the fish culture zones. There are biofilters at these zones at Kau Sai, Sham Wan and Lo Tik Wan. Alternative designs of biofilters are being explored to suit the conditions of different fish culture zones.

To meet public demand for recreational fishing facilities and to help mariculturists diversify their business, the AFCD implements a scheme to allow mariculturists to operate a recreational fishing business on licensed fish culture rafts. In 2011, 37 licensees in 11 fish culture zones were approved for such businesses.

The department continues to monitor red tides to protect the mariculture industry. It is now able to detect these tides as they start to form and take early action to deal with them. Red tide warnings are sent through support groups at the fish culture zones. Warnings are also posted on the AFCD's website and conveyed through press releases. In 2011, a total of 17 red tides were recorded in Hong Kong waters.

Wholesale Markets

Fresh food produce is sold in wholesale markets managed by the AFCD, the Vegetable Marketing Organisation (VMO), the Fish Marketing Organisation (FMO) and the private sector. During the year, Government wholesale markets handled 270 000 tonnes of vegetables, 13 000 tonnes of poultry, 49 000 tonnes of freshwater fish and fish products, 100 000 tonnes of fruit and 71 000 tonnes of eggs with a combined valued of \$5.7 billion.

The Western Wholesale Food Market and the Cheung Sha Wan Wholesale Food Market are the two largest composite wholesale food markets managed by the department. The Western Wholesale Food Market, for example, accommodates markets for freshwater fish, vegetables, fruit and eggs, enabling customers to purchase a wide range of fresh foods under one roof.

The AFCD also manages two temporary wholesale markets, one in the North District for fresh vegetables, and another in Cheung Sha Wan, for live poultry.

The VMO is a statutory body governed by the Agricultural Products (Marketing) Ordinance. It provides orderly wholesale marketing services for the sale of vegetables. It charges a commission on the vegetables sold, and in return provides trading facilities, transport and pesticide residue testing services to farmers and traders. Surplus income is ploughed back into farming development and scholarships for farmers' children. In 2011, the VMO handled 153 274 tonnes of vegetables valued at \$937 million.

The FMO is also a statutory body governed by the Marine Fish (Marketing) Ordinance. It provides orderly wholesale marketing services at its seven wholesale markets. Revenue comes from commissions from fish sales and from fees charged for the use of market facilities. Surplus earnings are channelled back to the fisheries industry by way of providing low-interest loans to fishermen, improving market services and facilities and providing training grants and scholarships for the fishermen and their children. During the year, some 43 600 tonnes of marine fish valued at \$1.98 billion were sold through the organisation. The organisation continues to develop quality fish products at its processing centre to help promote local products.

Control of Animal Diseases

As Hong Kong's inspection and quarantine authority for animals, the AFCD regulates cross-boundary animal movements to prevent animal diseases from entering the city. The AFCD also assesses the risk of disease in imported animals and animal products on the basis of their species, intended use and disease status of the place of origin. The AFCD explains Hong Kong's import requirements to overseas veterinary authorities when necessary.

In 2011, more than 6 100 permits were issued for animal imports. The animals included dogs, cats, horses, reptiles, birds, zoo animals and food animals such as pigs and cattle.

Quarantine Detector Dog Programme

The Quarantine Detector Dog Programme was introduced to help combat illegal importation of animals. The dogs can detect live mammals, birds, reptiles and animal products hidden in luggage or under layers of clothing. These dogs are deployed to various boundary control points including Lok Ma Chau, Shenzhen Bay and the Hong Kong International Airport. In 2011, more than 219 000 travellers, 1 500 vehicles and 25 000 parcels were screened.

Animal Management

The AFCD adopts various animal management measures to control animal diseases, regulate the trading of animals, and promote respect and care for animals.

Rabies is controlled effectively in Hong Kong, which has been rabies-free since the 1980s. In 2011, some 62 000 dogs were licensed and vaccinated against rabies. About 9 800 dogs and 4 000 cats were brought to the AFCD Animal Management Centres during the year. Most were strays but some were surrendered by their owners. The AFCD runs a re-homing programme for the healthy and well-tempered ones.

All pet shops selling animals must be licensed by the AFCD which inspects these shops regularly to ensure that they do not contravene any of the licence conditions. Pet shops are also now required to obtain dogs for sale only from approved sources. The AFCD runs a programme for promoting respect and care for animals. It uses a broad range of communication tools to drive home the message. Thematic exhibitions, roving exhibitions and carnivals were held during the year to promote responsible pet ownership and rabies prevention.

Animal Welfare

The AFCD collaborates with 13 Animal Welfare Organisations (AWOs) in providing animal re-homing services, covering dogs, cats, rabbits, birds and reptiles. In 2011, the AFCD further strengthened collaboration with and support to its partner organisations in the re-homing of animals, including inviting more AWOs to join forces with the AFCD in providing free de-sexing services for animals re-homed through the partner organisations.

To further improve the handling of animal cruelty reports or complaints, an Animal Welfare Task Group was set up involving the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and government departments, such as the Hong Kong Police, the FEHD and the AFCD, to enable better inter-departmental support for animal cruelty cases. The Task Group meets regularly to review the handling of animal cruelty cases, devise guidelines and to ensure that animal welfare is well protected. The AFCD has enhanced its co-operation with AWOs through expanding the membership of Animal Welfare Advisory Group (AWAG) and co-opting more representatives of AWOs to the various working groups under AWAG.

Websites

Food and Health Bureau: www.fhb.gov.hk

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department: www.fehd.gov.hk

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department: www.afcd.gov.hk