

Southern District Council
Community Affairs and Tourism Development Committee

A Pilot Study on the Contraception and Relocation of Wild Pigs
(Southern District) - Progress Report

Purpose

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) launched a Pilot Study on the Contraception and Relocation of Wild Pigs in October 2017. Southern District was one of the key trial sites of the Study. This paper will brief Members on the progress of the Study.

Background

2. Wild pig is the largest native terrestrial mammal in Hong Kong. It is widely distributed in the countryside especially woodland areas. In recent years, it is regularly observed that wild pigs are drawn to look for food in urban areas because of the attraction of human feeding and outdoor garbage. Wild pig's habituation to search food in urban areas results in nuisance to public.

3. In view of the above, AFCD launched a Pilot Study on the Contraception and Relocation of Wild Pigs (the Study) in October 2017. The aim of the Study is to provide contraceptive treatment to wild pigs habituated to search for food in urban areas and relocate them to remote countryside areas. In the Study, AFCD is working closely with United States Department of Agriculture and the Animal and Plant Health Agency, UK to evaluate the effectiveness of a contraceptive vaccine developed for mammalian species, GonaCon™, on controlling the fertility of wild pigs by field trials. During the operation, AFCD's contractor will deploy veterinarians to capture wild pigs by using tranquiliser dart guns and administer GonaCon™ to suitable female wild pigs. In addition, AFCD is exploring the feasibility of providing permanent surgical contraceptive treatment to wild pigs in the field. AFCD will relocate those wild pigs causing nuisance to remote countryside so as to abate their immediate nuisance.

Progress

4. AFCD commenced the two-year Study in Southern District in October 2017. The following is the progress report of the Study.

(I) Capture

5. AFCD arranged 19 operations and captured 71 wild pigs in Southern District from October 2017 to September 2018. Please refer to **Annex** for the date and locations of the operations. Tranquiliser dart gun was used to sedate wild pigs from a distance and it normally takes 10 to 15 minutes for wild pigs to be fully sedated. To ensure the safety of both the public and wild pigs, operations sites should have adequate flat space and be located away from steep slope, catchwater, road, footpath, etc, as far as possible to avoid wild pigs dashing out of the confinement and run into passers-by, vehicles, or other dangerous sites during operations. This renders certain constraints while selecting operation sites for a nuisance hotspot. In addition, the operations require long preparation time and a large amount of manpower. AFCD will learn from experience and seek advice from overseas experts to refine capture procedures and improve the capture efficiency.

(II) Contraception

6. In the Study, 17 female wild pigs were administered with GonaCon™ while four other wild pigs received permanent surgical sterilization. According to an overseas study, GonaCon™ is effective in captive wild pigs for at least four to six years and does not have any side effect on them. The preliminary evaluation on the effectiveness of GonaCon™ and the feasibility of conducting surgical sterilisation for wild pigs in the field will be completed by the end of 2019.

(III) Relocation

7. In order to abate the immediate nuisance caused by wild pigs, AFCD relocated 53 wild pigs captured in the Study to remote countryside. GPS transmitters and microchips were installed to suitable wild pigs to monitor their behavior after relocation. Result shows that the home range of relocated wild pigs were very large, and some of the relocated wild pigs resumed searching for food at the closest human settlements. AFCD will continue the study to collect more data for further evaluation on the effectiveness of relocation as a nuisance handling measure.

Other Management Measures

8. In addition to the Study, AFCD will adopt a multipronged approach to abate the nuisance caused by wild pigs, including managing wild pig nuisance and monitoring wild pig population, reducing food attraction in the public areas, promoting public awareness to remind the public not to feed wild animals, and reviewing the effectiveness of the management measures regularly.

Advice Sought

9. Members are invited to comment on the Pilot Study on the Contraception and Relocation of Wild Pigs and other wild pig management measures.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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