

# Councils lack sting in bringing Aedes breeders to book

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**PETALING JAYA** — Local councils are allowing Aedes breeders to get away scot-free.

Checks by *Malay Mail* found two local councils in the Petaling district, which has been listed as having the top 10 dengue hotspots in the country, had let residents caught breeding dengue mosquitoes to get away without paying fines.

Subang Jaya Municipal Council corporate communications deputy director Muhammad Azli Miswan said the council was unwilling to drag those with unpaid compounds to court as it would be costly to pursue the case.

Muhammad Azli said most of the RM500 compounds last year had not been paid and there was little the council could do.

"If we pursue the case, we will have to foot the legal bill," he said.

Azli said residents did not allow council officers to enter private homes during fogging and inspections.

weekends.

Deputy mayor Puasa Mohd Taib said the RM500 fine could not justify taking residents who had not paid their compounds to court.

"We will need to foot the cost for the lawyer, and the investigation papers are also costly.

"Sometimes offenders approach us and ask for reductions in the compounds, and we give them a warning letter and reduce the fine to as low as RM100," said Puasa.

Puasa said the federal government should discuss with local councils the possibility of amending the law and increasing the fines as a more effective deterrent.

"Increasing the fines should be the top pri-

ority so to deter potential offenders.

"I am sure a RM1,000 fine will alert residents to the consequences of irresponsible behaviour," he said.

In Penang, Seberang Prai Municipal Council president Datuk Maimunah Mohd Sharif said health officers did not face problems entering and inspecting premises.

She said officers from the council's health department frequently checked residential, commercial and industrial areas.

"Some 73 compounds were issued last year and 40 paid the compounds amounting to RM10,362.

"We have sent notices to the rest to settle their compounds and we will make sure that they pay up," she said.



Section 25 of the Destruction of Disease-bearing Insects Act 1975 states that a maximum RM500 compound can be issued to an offender if Aedes mosquito larvae is found within one's premises.

Under Section 23 the Act, those who fail to pay the compound can be charged in court and fined RM10,000 or jailed two years for the first offence, while repeat offenders may be fined up to RM50,000 or jailed up to five years.

"They are afraid we will compound them if they let us enter."

He said the council was not entering the properties merely to fine residents.

"Our purpose is to identify possible breeding grounds and educate the owner," he said.

"We try to do all we can — awareness programmes, *gotong-royong* sessions, and cleaning the drains but sometimes the breeding is within the home of the resident.

"What can we do if we can't inspect and identify these breeding grounds?"

Petaling Jaya City Council vector control unit head Lee Heng Kuang said 800 compounds were issued last year, of which only half were paid.

"When they don't pay the compound, we send them reminder notices every three months.

"Usually the first round of reminders will result in 10 per cent of them paying up," he said.

Lee said only 10 to 20 per cent of residents would allow council officers into their premises for inspection.

"Some people's attitude and non-cooperation have contributed to the increasing dengue cases," he said.

Lee said officers inspected at least 60 to 100 premises in the city daily, except on



An Ipoh City Council worker carries out fogging in Taman Pakatan. In Petaling district, council officers say fogging is not enough as sometimes the breeding grounds are within the premises but they are not allowed in by the owners.

Under Section 5 of the Destruction of Disease-bearing Insects Act 1975, the health director-general, a health medical officer or an inspector may enter and examine any premises between 6am and 10pm.

When necessary, the authorities may enter the premises after giving at least 24-hour notice to the owner or occupant of the premises.

In exercising these powers, the authority may enter the house by force if necessary.

# Toothless councils need to learn how to bite

By Alexander Winifred  
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**PETALING JAYA** — Local councils need to come down hard on dengue offenders or they will become a party to the increasing number of dengue cases which threaten the lives of Malaysians nationwide.

National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam

Thye said it was the duty of local councils to enforce the law.

"The Health Ministry depends on them to take their job seriously and do so without fear or favour," said Lee.

On grouses by councils that they were unable to enter premises to perform inspections, Lee said the authorities should seek amendments to the law to enable them to serve their role.

"They can't make excuses, especially in this time when fatalities are increasing.

"If the laws are not adequate, amend them to take action — the councils must ensure they are equipped to do what is necessary.

"There is no point having a toothless local authority that can't bite and perform its duties," said Lee.

He described those who, through their irresponsible actions, bred Aedes mosquitoes as "failing to understand the value of life".

"Their very actions threaten the lives

of others.

"For the councils to even allow offenders to appeal for reductions in compounds is unacceptable," he said.

Lee called upon Malaysians to take the warnings by the Health Ministry regarding the rise in dengue cases "very seriously."

"The exercise to eradicate dengue must include the entire community.

"We need to make sure we do not create breeding grounds for the mosquitoes," he said.