

517 New Territories farmers apply for emergency relief

By JOHN TANG ^{21.4}

A TOTAL of 517 farmers have so far applied for emergency relief grants for losses in the flooding in the New Territories caused by Typhoon Warren.

The Agriculture and Fisheries Department received 349 more applications yesterday, comprising 306 crop and livestock farmers and 43 fish pond farmers.

The typhoon which swept through Hongkong on Wednesday morning caused the death of thousands of livestock and tonnes of fish in Yuen Long and Sheung Shui.

A spokesman for the department urged crop livestock and pond fish farmers who had suffered extensive damage or extreme hardship to report their losses.

All cases would be investigated and a maximum of \$1,440 would be granted as emergency relief funds to

each farmer, the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, the Heung Yee Kuk said yesterday the Government was responsible for the flooding.

Mr Chan Tin-sung, vice-chairman of the New Territories advisory body, criticised the Government for failing to heed warnings from villagers.

Villagers had on many occasions complained to officials that construction activities in Yuen Long and Sheung Shui had blocked the drainage systems.

Kuk members later discussed the matter with the Regional Secretary (New Territories) of City and New Territories Administration, Mr Michael Suen Ming-yeung, who said the Government would look into the matter.

● The Heung Yee Kuk, representing New Territories residents, yesterday urged the Government to scrap an

allegedly unfair policy of limiting the amount of compensation to landowners whose properties are resumed.

Kuk members said the Government should remove the upper limit so as to allow the compensation rates to fluctuate in accordance with market value.

Mr Lau Wong-fat, chairman of the body that claims to represent the interests of 500,000 people, said the existing policy was unfair because of the high inflation rate.

The kuk suggested the upper ceiling should be scrapped, while the lower limit should be retained.

It also called for a 20 per cent rise in compensation rates to compensate for the loss of a potential development by the seller.

The existing range, \$33 to \$124 per square foot, was agreed by the kuk and the City and New Territories Administration in 1983.