



Australian Government

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

Investigation into the reportable cattle mortality level for the voyage from Fremantle to Tanjung Priok (Jakarta) March 2007

1. Purpose

To report on the investigation into the cause of the mortalities in cattle and to make recommendations with the objective of reducing the likelihood of a recurrence.

2. Summary

The cause of the high number of mortalities was investigated. During the voyage 68 of 1695 cattle loaded died which equates to a mortality rate of 4%.

The likely contributing causes were:

- Rough weather conditions from the presence of nearby cyclones leading to injuries and recumbency, often requiring humane destruction.

3. Background

The investigation into the mortality was carried out by reviewing the following information:

1. Stockman's end of voyage report.
2. Stockman's Daily Reports
3. Report from the exporter.
4. Records from the registered premises.
5. Report by the master of the vessel.
6. Report from the AQIS certifying veterinarian.
7. AQIS audit of the consignment.

Table 1: Chronology of events

Action	Date
NOI and CRMP submitted and processed	28 February 2007
1695 cattle loaded in Fremantle	4 March 2007
1 cow died	6 March 2007
1 Friesian heavy steer died	9 March 2007
3 steers died + 3 downer cows	10 March 2007
21 head died (euthanased 9)	11 March 2007
Notice of a notifiable incident received by AQIS	11 March 2007
20 head died	12 March 2007
Unloaded 1629 cattle Tanjung Priok	12 & 13 March 2007

4. Findings

4.1 Deaths in Registered Premises

The cattle exported from Fremantle were received at the registered premises on 1 March 2007. The records of the registered premises indicated 5 mortalities over the preparation period.

Table 2: Mortalities in the registered premises

Date	Animal ID	Cause of Death
2/03/2007	P642 (Friesian Bull)	Broken front leg (destroyed)
2/03/2007	DBN0265 (Cow)	Travel paralysis
2/03/2007	42 (Cow)	Grain overload (over eating)
3/03/2007	NP Tag (Cow)	Unknown (Old Age)
3/03/2007	Expt. Tag 23345 (Bull)	Over riding

No abnormal circumstances were noted during the preparation of the cattle in the registered premises. 5 cattle were rejected from the consignment due to: lameness, a lump on the neck and an eye problem. 1695 cattle were loaded on 4 March 2007. The cattle were mostly of beef type and included 428 Friesian cattle.

4.2 Journey

The climatic condition for the cattle decks were as follows

Table 3: Climatic conditions

Day of voyage	Dry bulb	Wet bulb	Humidity	Deaths	Daily water consumption	Daily weather conditions from daily reports
2	29.6	27	82	1	27.7	Moderate following seas. Vessel rolling slightly. Low swell
3	29	26	79	0	32	Southerly/4. Vessel rolling slightly. Low swell.
4	31	28	78.7	0	35	SE/4, Vessel rolling slightly. Low swell.
5	31	27	79	1	31.2	N/7. Near gale. Vessel rolling and pitching moderately. Crossed the line joining TC Jacob and TC George. Expect weather to improve later today.
6	31	28	80	3	28	WNW/6. Very rough. Vessel rolling and pitching slightly. Improving weather condition as vessel moving farther away from Tropical Cyclone disturbance.
7	30.5	27	77.3	21	30	NW/%. Rather rough. Vessel rolling and pitching slightly.
8	30.8	27	77	20	35	NW/3 slight with moderate rain showers.

The reportable mortality trigger for a short haul cattle voyage is 0.5 per cent. The reportable mortality level was triggered some time between 11 and 12 March but likely on 11 March.

The exporter arranged for a veterinarian to discuss the situation with the stockman and to meet the vessel at the port for unloading in Indonesia. The report from the veterinarian indicated the cause of the mortalities was trauma from the rough weather. During the time of rough weather, the crew did not attend to the cattle because of safety concerns which also contributed to the stress on the cattle. The most severely affected were the older cows.

There were no findings during the AQIS audit which would suggest that the cattle were not prepared and exported in accordance with the ASEL.

5. AMSA evaluation of the vessel on return to Australia

The vessel was permitted to load livestock when it returned to Australia.

Conclusion

The factors contributing to the cattle mortalities were the rough weather and trauma.

AMSA have noted that the emergence of cyclone Jacob after cyclone George would have resulted in a very large area of rough seas. The passage of a livestock vessel through this area at that time was an unfortunate and unpredictable event.

Action

No action was taken against the exporter as the emergence of the two cyclones was an unfortunate and unpredictable event.