



Investigation into reportable cattle mortality level on an air voyage from Melbourne to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia via Brisbane, May 2008

1. Purpose

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

2. Summary

There were 14 mortalities of the 123 cattle loaded which equates to a mortality rate of 11.3%. There were no mortalities for the sheep and goats that were also loaded on this aircraft.

The likely cause of the reportable mortality rate on this voyage was suffocation due to inadequate ventilation in the rear hold of the lower cargo compartment of the aircraft where the cattle were held.

Background

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

1. report from the exporter;
2. records from the approved premises; and
3. report from the AQIS certifying veterinarian
4. report from the airline.

3. Findings

3.1 Review of records of approved premises

The cattle exported from Melbourne were present at the approved premises from 13 May until loading on the 20 May. The records of the approved premises indicated no mortalities over the preparation period.

The inspection records indicated there were 3 rejects. These cattle were rejected because they did not meet importing country requirements.

3.2 Loading and Journey

The records indicate the cattle were loaded in accordance with ASEL in the lower cargo compartment of the aircraft.

The flight route was Melbourne – Brisbane – Kuala Lumpur. The cattle were checked in Brisbane and were travelling as expected. The airline reported a ventilation failure in the Brisbane to Kuala Lumpur flight leg. The post mortem undertaken in Malaysia indicated suffocation as the cause of death.

As the lower cargo compartment was unable to be physically monitored, the consequences were not evident until arrival in Malaysia.

4. Conclusion

The factors contributing to the cattle mortalities on board the aircraft were suffocation due to inadequate ventilation in the rear hold of the lower cargo compartment of the aircraft where the cattle were held.

The ventilation appears to have been adequate in the leg of the flight between Melbourne and Brisbane.

Inadequate ventilation in the lower cargo hold is infrequent and unpredictable but when it occurs may cause significant number of mortalities.

5. Recommendations

Additional conditions are considered for subsequent consignments for the exporter.

AQIS recommends that the Livestock Export Industry and the Livestock Export Standards Advisory Committee (LESAC) review whether it is appropriate to transport livestock in the lower cargo compartment of an aircraft.

6. Actions

The following conditions were applied to subsequent consignments:

- . no livestock are to be loaded in the lower cargo compartment (belly hold) of the air craft.
- . an AQIS officer to supervise loading of live-stock on to the aircraft

Following the successful export of 13 consignments of livestock, the condition was modified to:

- . no cattle are to be loaded in the lower cargo compartment (belly hold) of the aircraft.
- . an AQIS officer to supervise loading of live-stock on to the aircraft.

7. Results

The exporter has exported 13 subsequent sheep, cattle and goat consignments with no mortalities.