

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Girolando Express*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in May 2019

Report 120, October 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 2,305 cattle was loaded onto the *MV Girolando Express* at Townsville on 4 and 5 May 2019. The cattle were discharged at the port of Thi Vai General Port, Vietnam on 18 and 19 May 2019 making this a 16 day voyage.

An Independent Observer (observer) boarded the vessel at Townsville and remained on board until completion of discharge.

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.61% (14 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations and has been approved by the observer who accompanied this voyage.

Independent Observations of the implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of livestock

Exporter Documentation

Exporter arrangements were available to address procedures relating to livestock management from loading through to discharge and contingencies.

Loading

Loading of the cattle was without any incident. The cattle were loaded in accordance with the load plan. Most pens provided ample space for movement and rest and more than 50% of the cattle could lie down at the same time.

Personnel

The Chief Officer (CO) was dedicated, passionate and very active in vessel operations, crew and livestock supervision. The bosun supervised and managed the crew assigned to the maintenance of the health and welfare of the livestock, and also coordinated the loading and discharge. The crew were dedicated, diligent and competent in their daily duties and maintaining the health and welfare of the livestock was one of their key priorities.

The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) was knowledgeable, competent and dedicated and always had the welfare of the livestock as his main priority.

Daily routine

A daily meeting was held at 10:00am and was attended by the stockperson, CO, bosun and the observer. The discussions included livestock movements, treatments, planned wash downs and completion of daily reports.

One night watch crew member was on duty during 4 hour shifts. The observer checked the overnight activity and found the night watch person maintaining water troughs.

Feed and water

There were generally 4 feeder troughs and 2 nose activated filling water bowls in each pen with good access to feed troughs and water. Feed and water troughs were routinely cleaned each day, and were also monitored and cleaned between the routine cleans.

Feed troughs were manually filled by the crew that accessed the fodder from chutes on each deck. The cattle were fed pellets 3 times per day at 7:00am, 10:00am and 3:30pm.

Water was produced by 2 reverse osmosis plants. Water was available 24 hours per day from the nose bowls.

Ventilation

Early in the voyage, the vessel experienced a mechanical engine failure. However, all electrical and ventilation systems continued as normal. The arrival in Vietnam was delayed by 3 days because the speed of the vessel was reduced.

For the duration of the voyage, the ventilation system worked well with no problems encountered.

The daily temperature was recorded around 9:00am and remained relatively constant at around 28 - 32°C dry bulb, 25 - 28°C wet bulb and 78 - 80% humidity. Decks 4 and 5 were the warmest of all 5 decks.

Pen conditions

Pad maintenance was observed daily and found to be 98% good dry pads. The crew added any uneaten or spilled fodder to the pad to assist with pad maintenance. Sawdust was also laid to assist pad establishment. The decks were washed on over 2 days (days 10 - 11). Sawdust was used to remediate wet or sloppy pens.

Health and welfare

Cattle movement between pens and decks during the voyage was good. Hospital pens were used to hold cattle requiring treatments for lameness and leg injuries. Sawdust was used in hospital pens as bedding.

There were 14 mortalities for the voyage. The cause of mortality for 6 of the cattle was attributed to respiratory disease. The remaining mortalities were associated with recumbency and various leg injuries but were not subject to post mortem inspections.

The vessel was held at anchor for 24 hours outside the discharge port in hot humid conditions. The observer noted some heat stress indicators in the heavy bulls located on Deck 5 including increased respiratory rate and some cattle with open mouth with tongues out respiration.

Whilst at anchor, the ventilation was operating but the air movement was not as cool as it would have been if the ship was moving. The conditions were recorded on the decks as 32°C and 80% humidity. The vessel moved anchor on several occasions to attempt to generate cooler air. One bull was found dead the next morning and another mortality was detected at discharge. The 2 bulls were not subject to a post mortem inspection.

The stockperson was always available, performed all treatments to the injured or sick livestock, and euthanised animals as required. The standard of management of the health and welfare of the cattle was very good.

Discharge

There were no injuries observed or reported while discharging the livestock.

Conclusion

The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* requirements.

A breakdown early in the voyage resulted in a longer than expected voyage. There were 14 mortalities during the voyage associated with respiratory disease, heat stress, recumbency and leg issues.

Hot humid conditions while the vessel was held at anchor outside the discharge port resulted in heat stress in the heavy bulls on Deck 5 of the vessel.

The vessel management, stockperson and crew performed their duties in a professional manner with health and welfare as the main priority.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 3 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 6 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 8 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 10 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 14 Cattle in pen – heat stress

