Independent Observer summary report on MV *Galloway Express*

Cattle exported to China in August 2019

Report 173, December 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 1,812 cattle was loaded onto the MV *Galloway Express* at the Port of Fremantle on 17 August 2019 and left on the same day. The cattle were discharged at the Port of Ningbo, China between 29 and 30 August 2019, making this a 14 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the voyage was 0.77% (14 cattle). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of these mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by an 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, including contingencies.

Loading

Ramps and lane ways were lined with sawdust before loading. Livestock were loaded in a manner that prevented injury and caused minimal stress. Overall, the vessel was not loaded to full capacity with approximately 500m^2 spare pen area when compared with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3) (*ASEL*)* minimum requirements. The cattle had adequate access to feed and water troughs during loading.

Personnel

The master has overall responsibility for the vessel, cargo and all personnel. The Chief Officer (CO) maintained contact with the Australian Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) in the overall management of the cattle. The livestock crew appeared experienced and competent when working around livestock.

An AAV and stockperson accompanied the consignment. The AAV and stockperson were experienced, capable and worked with the crew to maintain animal health and welfare throughout the voyage.

The AAV inspected the cattle, treated unwell animals, performed post mortems and formulated a daily report during the voyage. The stockpersons duties included ensuring the cattle had satisfactory provisions including fodder, water, ventilation and pads.

Daily routine

A management meeting was held each day at 10:30am and was attended by the CO, bosun, AAV and stockperson. The topics of discussion included feeding, treatments and wash day plans.

The night watch personnel were assigned on a four hour shift between 4:00pm and 8:00am. The duties of the night watch person was to monitor water troughs and maintain the check the welfare of the cattle on all decks.

Feed and water

The fodder loaded on the vessel exceeded the ASEL requirement. The pelleted fodder was stored in three silos and was delivered to chutes on each deck. The crew manually filled the fodder troughs that hung on the outside of pen rails. Three to five troughs were available for each pen. The cattle were fed pellets twice a day and chaff was fed to various pens at 3:30pm.

Water was produced using four reverse osmosis units. Fresh water was supplied to the cattle by automatic nose bowls located in the corners of the pens. Water availability was adequate for the whole voyage.

Ventilation

The vessel had 5 enclosed decks. The ventilation system supplied air directly into the livestock pens via large overhead pipes and the air extraction system removed warmer air and odours. The ventilation system was monitored on the bridge with alerts to notify of any malfunction. The hatches on Deck 5 were left open for the entire voyage to aid ventilation.

The ventilation system functioned consistently however, high equatorial temperatures were experienced for much of the day and night, providing little or no period of respite for the cattle.

Temperatures were recorded at around 9:30am daily on each deck using a whirling hygrometer. The observer noted that the temperatures recorded at 9:30am were not the hottest part of the day. The daily deck temperatures recorded in the daily report around the equatorial region when the signs of heat stress were observed were 30 - 33°C dry bulb, 27 – 28°C wet bulb and 72 – 78% humidity.

Pen conditions

Sawdust was added to pens and hospital pens to improve pad condition as required. For the most part of the voyage, pads remained dry and appeared acceptable. Unconsumed pellets and chaff were added to the pad which appeared to benefit the condition of the pad.

Deck washing commenced on day 9 in hold three of Deck 4 and 5. The wash down was split over three days on this voyage and the observer found it to be stress free to the cattle. Sawdust was applied to all pens after the wash.

Health and welfare

The AAV and stockperson routinely inspected the livestock twice a day. Any animals identified as having an injury or illness were transferred to hospital pens and given appropriate medication. Approximately 8 cattle were treated for lameness during the voyage.

There were fourteen mortalities during the voyage. The AAV attributed 5 mortalities to heat stress, 4 mortalities were due to enterotoxaemia and pneumonia, 3 mortalities were due to undetermined causes and 2 animals were euthanased.

On day 6, the vessel stopped for engine repairs between 11:30am and 5:48pm. Livestock services including the ventilation system were maintained. However, the walls and sundeck were being heated by direct sunlight as there was an absence of any cloud cover in the equatorial region with no cooling effect from normal travel movement. The AAV noted that heat from the engine room contributed to the hot areas on the vessel.

There were five mortalities cause by heat stress between days 6 and 8. High temperatures negatively impacted the health and welfare of other animals on the vessel. The observer noted 25% of livestock were affected by heat stress on Deck 4, hold 3 on days 6 – 8. The signs of heat stress included increased respiratory rate, necks extended, open mouth breathing, tongues protruding, cattle congregating usually under the best ventilated area, lethargic demeanour and suppressed appetite.

Strategies were implemented to reduce the number of livestock affected by the heat including reducing the stocking densities of pens in hot spots of Deck 4, hold 3, ensuring ad lib access to clean cool water, washing the decks, spraying the vessel structure to reduce heat and minimise the disturbance of livestock.

Discharge

Cattle had access to adequate feed and water during the discharge process. Overall, the discharge was undertaken in a timely manner and the health and welfare of the cattle was maintained throughout the process.

Conclusion

The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Cattle in pen - no issues identified

Day 5 Cattle in pen - no issues identified

Day 8 Cattle in pen – heat stress deck 4

Day 8 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

Day 9 Cattle in pen - no issues identified

Day 10 Cattle in pen - no issues identified