Independent Observer summary report on MV *Ocean Drover*

Cattle exported to China in September 2019

Report 179, January 2020

Voyage summary

A consignment of 8,316 head of cattle was loaded onto the MV *Ocean Drover* at Portland between 1 and 2 September 2019. The vessel departed on 2 September 2019. The cattle were discharged at the Port of Tianjin, China, between 16 and 17 September 2019, making this a 17 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.02% (2 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of these 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

The observer did not note any issues during loading. Given the small size of the consignment, the cattle were provided with up to 40% additional space over and above the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* (ASEL) requirements. This arrangement provided all cattle with sufficient access to feed and water and meant there was little evidence of aggressive or competitive behaviour at feeding. There was also space for all cattle to sit or lay down at any one time across most pens.

Personnel

An Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV), three LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) and one trainee stockperson on-board the vessel were responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures and worked in teams to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage. The observer noted that this appeared to be an effective use of resources and provided adequate supervision of cattle which helped to maintain

good animal welfare outcomes. The crew were observed to be competent animal handlers and effectively performed their duties.

Daily routine

An initial cattle inspection was carried out at 7:00am to ensure stock were able to rise. A more thorough cattle inspection took place after breakfast to administer treatments, identify cattle requiring treatment, and draft cattle to hospital pens where necessary.

A cattle management meeting was held each day at 10:00am and was attended by the Chief Officer (CO), bosun, AAV, stockpersons and observer. Topics discussed included animal health and treatments, deck maintenance, feeding schedule and crew performance. On alternate days a walk through every pen was conducted. A further round of inspections occurred at the time of the afternoon feed from 3.30pm.

Crew were assigned to nightwatch duty in one hour shifts between 6:00pm – 5:00am. Their duties included monitoring the health and welfare of the cattle and ensuring the water supply to the cattle was maintained.

Feed and water

The cattle were fed pelleted fodder twice a day and hay was fed out once a day.

Water was supplied via an automated system, troughs were operated by a ball and valve system. Troughs required regular monitoring to prevent flooding or blockages. Crew were diligent in identifying and repairing any malfunctioning water troughs.

During the voyage livestock were moved as necessary to spare pens to reduce stocking density and ensure good access to feed and water.

Ventilation

The ventilation systems and fans installed on all the decks functioned effectively throughout the voyage. Open decks appeared better ventilated than enclosed decks, however, as the vessel approached the equator the conditions on all decks became more humid.

No hot spots or heat stress was identified on the decks where cattle were loaded.

Temperature and humidity readings were taken once a day on all decks prior to the daily meeting. During the voyage the dry bulb temperatures ranged from 20 °C to 30 °C dry bulb, 19 °C to 28°C wet bulb and 73-85% humidity.

Pen conditions

During the initial days of the voyage pads on all decks remained in good condition. As the vessel approached the equator, the pads on all decks became moist and those on the open decks were noticeably wetter than those on the enclosed decks. The cattle in these pens tended to drink more and urinated more frequently.

The condition of the pads in the pens on the lowest of the open decks deteriorated further with the onset of rough conditions on day 10 due to exposure to rain and direct wave action.

Wash-down of all open decks occurred on day 11 and the enclosed decks on day 12. The ongoing rough conditions necessitated a further wash-down of Deck 6 on day 14 because of ongoing wave action.

The pad condition on the enclosed decks remained boggy until the vessel discharged while the open deck pads tended to become more friable with the return to more temperate conditions.

While the pad conditions did vary throughout the voyage this did not appear to contribute to any adverse animal health or welfare outcomes.

Health and welfare

During the voyage 121 cattle were treated for conditions including pink-eye, lameness, facial abscess and respiratory disease.

Cattle that required ongoing supervision or with conditions such as pneumonia or open wounds were moved to hospital pens, otherwise they were treated in their pen.

The majority of the treated cattle made a full recovery with less than 30 head being discharged and requiring on-going observation or treatment.

The regular and thorough inspections by the AAV and stockpersons meant that cattle with conditions requiring medical treatment were identified in a timely manner and provided with appropriate treatment.

Cattle that were shy feeders or poorer in condition were moved to spare pens to assist in monitoring and improve their access to feed and water including additional hay. These cattle were observed to respond positively to these husbandry changes.

There were two mortalities during the voyage. One animal was euthanased on day 5 with the post-mortem findings indicating a pre-existing pleuro-pneumonia. The second mortality was due to an animal with ill-thrift that was unable to be discharged.

Discharge

The crew, AAV and stockpersons operated a roster to ensure the discharge was constantly supervised from the time of commencement of discharge until the last animal was unloaded.

Prior to discharge commencing, sawdust was laid on all ramps including within the vessel and on the discharge ramp. This was maintained throughout discharge to minimise the risks of cattle slipping or falling. Potential leg traps were identified and protected with bags filled with sawdust.

Water and feed was provided to cattle on board throughout the discharge. Discharge was undertaken efficiently and with animal welfare as the priority.

Conclusion

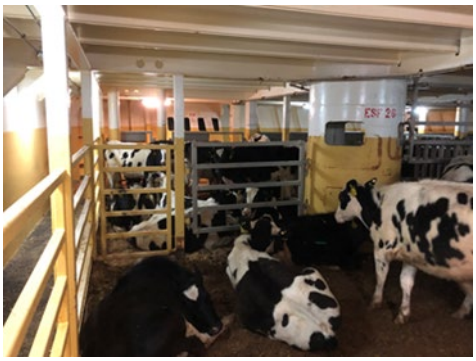
Appropriate animal health and welfare standards were maintained throughout the voyage with regular monitoring of the livestock and timely treatments for any injuries or illness.

Livestock services on the vessel including provision of feed, water and ventilation functioned effectively even in adverse weather conditions experienced over 4 days of the voyage.

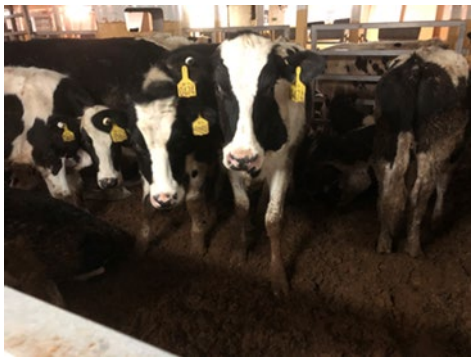
The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with the ASEL requirements.

Representative photographs of the voyage

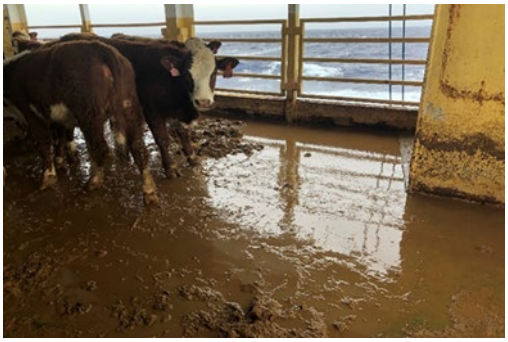
Day 3 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



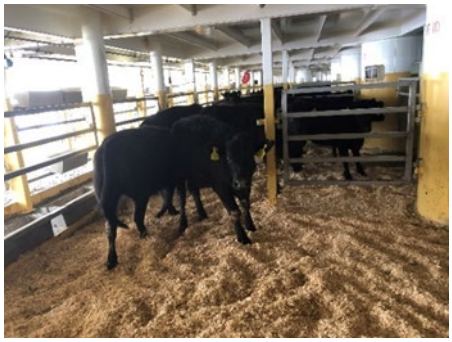
Day 7 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



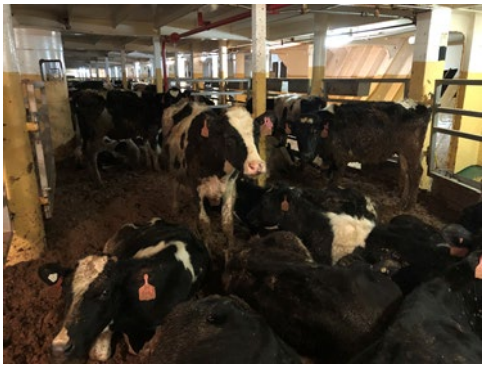
Day 10 Cattle in pen—rough weather



Day 11 Cattle in pen—after wash down



Day 15 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 16 Cattle in pen—no issues identified