# Independent Observer summary report on MV *Yangtze Fortune*

## Cattle exported to China in November 2019

**Report 201, April 2020**

### Voyage summary

A consignment of 4,165 cattle was loaded onto the MV *Yangtze Fortune* at the Port of Portland, Victoria, on the 16 November 2019. The vessel departed on 16 November 2019 and cattle were discharged at the Port of Qinzhou, China on 3 December 2019, making this a 18-day voyage.

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

There were no mortalities on this voyage.

The following comments are a summary of key observations and have 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

No issues were observed during loading and cattle were managed humanely and in a stress-free manner by stevedores and crew.

The cattle were not strictly loaded according to the load plan. The observer noted that after commencement of loading, pen densities varied between lines of cattle, with some stocking densities appearing heavier than the load plan. By day 3, animals had been shuffled to ensure adequate space across all decks and lines. Stocking density was compliant with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* (ASEL) requirements.

#### Personnel

An Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and a LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanied the voyage, and were responsible for implementing the exporter's procedures to ensure the health and the welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage. The AAV and head stockperson were both experienced in livestock export voyages.

The vessel's officers and crew worked effectively to ensure welfare standards were kept at a high level.

## Daily routine

Management meetings were held daily at 10:00am and were attended by the Chief Officer (CO), bosun AAV, stockperson and the observer. Meetings between the bosun and crew members occurred daily at 8:00am.

Feeding was automated to each deck and was then distributed manually to feed troughs for each pen. The first feed was of hay, which commenced at 7:00am. Pellets were fed twice daily at 10:30am and 3:30pm.

The nightwatch duties comprised of 1-2 crew working two 6-hour shifts between 6:00pm and 6:00am.

## Feed and water

The fodder loaded on the vessel was in excess of ASEL requirements.

Feeding rates did not meet ASEL requirements. For the first 7 days of the voyage, reported feeding rates were on average 1.0-1.5kg of feed per head below ASEL requirements. Most feed troughs were observed to be licked clean by the cattle, with some animals jostling and competing for pellets. The observer reported that the affected cattle stopped these behaviours after feeding. By day 10 of the voyage, feeding rates had increased to above ASEL requirements and the observer witnessed less competition for food.

Shy feeders were identified daily by the AAV or stockperson and were moved to hospital pens where they had access to feed and water without competition.

The vessel was fitted with two reverse osmosis units to generate water which automatically replenished water troughs through a cock and ball system. The livestock crew consistently maintained the water troughs in a clean condition throughout the voyage.

Previous voyages on this vessel have experienced minor flooding due to leaking water troughs. The observer reported that occasional flooding events occurred during this voyage. These resulted from water pipes pulled from troughs by cattle, broken float-valve mechanisms or from unsteady sea conditions. The observer noted that the ship's crew identified, reported and fixed water leaks quickly and consistently. Cattle in these affected pens had access to water at all times despite this issue and no negative effects on their health or welfare were observed.

## Ventilation

The vessel had a total of eight fully enclosed decks, with a combination of ventilation supply fans and exhaust fans. The observer reported that ventilation maintained a constant air flow, with consistent temperatures and humidity throughout all decks.

The highest recorded dry bulb temperature reached 31°C. The maximum recorded humidity was 78%. On days 10 to 16 when the vessel reached the equator, the observer noted that some cattle were mildly heat affected, with elevated respiration rates and/or lying prone in pens. All affected cattle were observed recovered or feeding within a few hours. No negative health or welfare outcomes for the cattle resulted from these conditions.

## Pen conditions

Pad conditions were monitored throughout the voyage and managed acceptably.

Deck washing was performed on days 9, 10, 13 and 14. The observer noted that the on-board AAV had an active role in wash-downs, requesting additional washing, for excess water to be sponged up and for additional sawdust to be laid. All cattle settled well after wash-down and pen conditions improved. Pad conditions became deeper and sloppier as humidity increased, however no negative health or welfare implications were observed upon the cattle within affected pens.

### Health and welfare

No mortalities occurred on this voyage.

Approximately 20 animals were treated on this voyage for respiratory disease, five for conjunctivitis, ten treated for lameness and some for shy-feeding. The observer reported that these animals had recovered well by the end of the voyage. By day 9 of the voyage, the observer noted that signs of ringworm had developed in cattle on Decks 1 to 7. The observer reported that animals affected by ringworm did not demonstrate any negative welfare outcomes and did not require treatment. Despite the signs of active ringworm, affected cattle appeared comfortable and otherwise healthy.

### Discharge

The cattle were provided with uninterrupted feed and water during discharge in Qinzhou and were unloaded smoothly.

The observer witnessed non-compliant handling by a member of the importer crew. Communication of proper animal handling practices to this individual were hindered by a language barrier, however the incident was quickly remedied by the CO.

Overall, the observer remarked that the AAV, stockperson, ship's crew and most Chinese import stock handlers worked professionally at discharge.

## Conclusion

The department has addressed a breach of procedures with the exporter to ensure cattle are fed to their requirements. Considering available information, the issues identified by the observer did not result in harmful health outcomes for the cattle.

The department has addressed a breach of procedures with the exporter to ensure health and welfare of the livestock in relation to the non-compliant handling demonstrated by the individual at discharge.

## Representative photographs of the voyage

**Day 2 - Dairy heifers in pen. No issues identified**

**Day 4 - Cattle in pen. No issues identified**

**Day 9 – Cattle in pen prior to wash-down**


**Day 10 - Cattle in pens after wash-down. No issues identified.**

**Day 15 – Cattle in pens during discharge. No issues identified**

**Day 7 – Demonstrating pad conditions**