

# Independent Observer summary report on *MV Anna Marra*

## Cattle exported to Russia in November 2019

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Report 203, July 2020

### Voyage summary

A consignment of 14,488 cattle were loaded onto the *MV Anna Marra* at Geelong between 18 and 21 November 2019, and at Fremantle commencing on 27 November 2019. The vessel departed Fremantle on 28 November 2019. Discharge of the cattle at Novorossiysk, Russia was completed on 29 December 2019, making this a 42 day voyage.

An Independent Observer (observer) boarded the vessel at Geelong and remained on board until a few hours after arrival at Novorossiysk.

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.17% (27 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate.

The following comments represent 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, and contingencies.

#### Loading

Some cattle were treated for conditions including lameness and loading injuries, with 6 cattle in hospital pens by Day 2. One steer, found dead in its pen during loading at Geelong, was later disposed of at sea. Pen densities varied and by Day 3 after loading in Geelong, re-arrangements were completed. All cattle appeared settled and had the opportunity to consume feed, with constant access to water at this time. The observer noted that the average loaded liveweight at Geelong was approximately 7 kg/head higher than initially calculated.

During the voyage, the load plan was observed to constantly evolve, with space becoming available as bedding and fodder was used. Higher density cattle pens identified by the observer were communicated to the exporter representative several times, and later at daily meetings during the voyage. Approximately 5% of pens throughout the vessel, were initially observed to be loaded with a higher number of cattle when compared to similar pens. This was observed to have impacted individual animal's ability to turn, or move to another area, within the pen. The

observer determined that most pens were very close to minimum requirements, but still within specifications.

## **Personnel**

There was an experienced Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and two LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) on board responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage.

Relationships between the AAV and stockpersons were observed to be good. Tasks were planned and discussed with the ship's officers, and crew representatives, at each daily meeting then assigned to the stockpersons, the officers, ship's crew, and the AAV. The teams assisted each other, for example when drafting cattle out of pens to move them to a hospital pen. The crew's competency, in animal handling and associated husbandry tasks, was observed to be of a good-to-high standard.

## **Daily routine**

The night crew of three people finished at 6:00am each morning with the ship's crew beginning work around 7:00am each day. The stockpersons were often on their assigned cattle decks before 7:00am to begin assessing cattle in the pens.

The crew started in the mornings with urgent cleaning or trough placement before feeding pellets and roughage. This was followed by cleaning of water troughs and the aisles between pens. On some days, extra tasks included deck washing and a second feed of roughage in the afternoons.

## **Feed and water**

Roughage was fed for the whole journey once or twice daily. Pellets were fed twice daily at 7:00am and 3:00pm. Leftover fines were consumed and were not observed to be an issue. Animals were always keen at feeding times with some becoming quite aggressive at the trough; particularly for morning feeds from 7am.

Aggression at the feed troughs was observed in many pens during the voyage when feeding was reduced, within [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 \(version 2.3\)](#) (ASEL) requirements, to 2% of liveweight within the pen. Some lower hierarchy cattle were observed to be unable to consume their fodder allocation, as the troughs could not be accessed by all pen mates at the same time. This reduced the amount of feed on offer for those shy feeders accessing the troughs last.

The water provided during the voyage more than satisfied the cattle requirements.

## **Ventilation**

No dead spots for heat or ventilation were observed. The smell of ammonia was detected in some areas, but never consistently or at a level that it affected the observer's eyes. The smell was observed most regularly on upper decks the day after washing and in areas of manure build up that became wet, warm and humid. The ventilation system in all locations was observed to function consistently and effectively.

## **Pen conditions**

The pad was managed as required with sufficient deck washing resulting in the pen pads never reaching 15cm except in some corners of some pens before washing commenced. During warmer and more humid conditions, some manure pads turned from firm to moist; but not watery. This seemed to be due to increased water intake per head, increased urination and reduced evaporation. As temperatures dropped, at the northern end of the Red Sea, the manure pad was observed to become firmer. Most cattle in all pens could lie down at the same time.

## **Health and welfare**

The cattle appeared to be very well prepared before loading, and to be well monitored for health and welfare by the crew and stockpersons during their daily checks. The AAV was observed to be proactive and they kept on top of the hospital animal's treatment and recovery. Towards the completion of the voyage, hospital animals were moved to pens adjacent to the unloading ramp so that they would be first to depart the vessel in a group, with additional space provided for trucking to the feedlot.

Causes of mortalities included septic arthritis (9); pneumonia (8), broken leg (3), misadventure (4), downer (1), bloat (1) and no diagnosis (1). Seventeen of the 27 mortalities were euthanased. The observer reported that euthanasia was performed in a timely and effective manner. Reasons for hospitalisation included pinkeye, lameness, shy feeders, diarrhoea, non-eaters and suspected Bovine Respiratory Disease cases. Shy feeders were placed in hospital pens so they could access feed more easily.

Each day approximately 10 of the less dominant cattle, which had remained in pens and competed for feed each day, were separated for lameness investigations. The AAV believed these cattle had become more susceptible to hind leg infections; especially from the jostling among animals. The cattle were using their hind feet to drive forward, in an attempt to gain access to the feed troughs, at feeding time. This jostling contributed to some of the mortalities, including an animal which broke a front leg whilst trying to access fodder.

Two other cattle were found dead in their pen after their heads had crossed over between the rails whilst attempting to access feed that had spilt into the aisle.

## **Discharge**

Discharge was not observed by the observer. Discharge was completed 8 days after berthing at Novorossiysk, on 29 December 2019. The AAV reported to the observer that no incidents occurred during discharge and that the head stockperson, or the AAV, supervised the entirety of discharge.

## **Conclusion**

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

The department has addressed the issues related to stocking density with the exporter.

## Representative photographs of the voyage

**Day 7 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 14 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 17 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 24 Cattle in pen—No Issues Identified**



**Day 27 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 33 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**

