Independent Observer summary report on MV *Anna Marra*

Cattle exported to Russia in February 2020

Report 214, June 2020

Voyage summary

A consignment of 12,076 cattle was loaded onto the MV *Anna Marra* at Portland between 30 January 2020 and 1 February 2020, with a further 4579 cattle loaded at Fremantle commencing on 6 February 2020. The vessel departed Fremantle on 7 February 2020. The cattle were discharged at Novorossiysk, Russia between 4 and 8 March 2020, making this a 39 day voyage.

An Independent Observer (observer) boarded the vessel at Portland on 1 February 2020 and remained on-board until completion of discharge.

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.34% (57 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 vessel was loaded close to the load plan at both ports, with adjustments made during the first few days at sea. Fodder and water were available within the 12 hour period of loading as required by Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL). All hospital pens were empty prior to loading. There was sufficient space for at least 50% of animals to lie down at once during the voyage.

No welfare issues were noted by the observer during loading at either port.

Personnel

The Australian Government Accredited veterinarian (AAV) and LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) were experienced stock handlers; with all except one having travelled on live export vessels previously.

The livestock crew, including the boson, took care of the ten decks of livestock. This included feeding, monitoring and cleaning water troughs, cleaning floors and keeping an eye on the stock in general. The crew were competent in their roles and were good animal handlers with no issues observed. The stockpersons and AAV worked well with the CO, master, bosun and the livestock crew.

Daily routine

The stockpersons looked after two decks each. The head stockperson oversaw all decks and the day's operation. The stockpersons would start their rounds checking each pen looking for lame, injured, sick or shy feeders. These were identified and treated in their pens or moved to hospital pens located on each deck as required. The same procedure took place each afternoon.

The AAV took care of the hospitalised livestock and was called to any livestock issues. The AAV performed post -mortem inspections when required, and euthanased animals as required.

The livestock crew was supervised by the bosun. They provided fodder and chaff, checked and cleaned water systems, swept alley ways and applied sawdust to pens where needed.

Feed and water

The pellets were automatically augered from holding silos to chutes located on each deck and then bagged or bucketed into feed troughs located at each pen by crew twice daily. The troughs were tied to rails to prevent them being knocked off. Pellet fodder was of good quality with minimal fines being emptied out at each feed cycle before feed troughs were refilled. Fines became more evident as the silos began to empty toward the end of the voyage. Fodder and floor sweepings which were swept up during the cleaning process were added to pens to firm up pads.

The water was of good quality with salinity tested daily. One plastic water trough was available per pen which was tied to a rail. The trough was automatic and cleaned out at each feeding cycle. The water troughs were never observed to be empty.

Ventilation

Ventilation of the vessel was good with airflow being felt in good supply around all decks of the vessel with no hot spots noted.

Temperatures recorded for the voyage attained a maximum of 32°C dry bulb, 30°C wet bulb with humidity levels reaching 87% on and around the equator for several nights. Respiratory rates were at normal levels, due to good ventilation of the vessel, with no open mouth panting observed.

Pen conditions

Bedding was loaded in excess of the exporter's Approved Export Program (AEP). Pens were of good condition with no protrusions to injure animals, and the floors of the vessel were coated in a non-slip adhesive to prevent injury from slipping. Dividing gates in most pens remained open through-out the voyage giving animals an extra bit of space, and the ability to manoeuvre around more in pens.

All pads remained firm until the equator, where increased humidity caused the pens to become clay or mud-like, to sloppy. Three day wash cycles, for most of the voyage, ensured the health and welfare of the animals. Drainage during wash cycles was observed to be good.

Pads remained firm during the 9 day unloading process, with the pads on the five lower decks reaching a depth of approximately 10-15cm. No issues were noted.

Health and welfare

The cattle were observed to be of good condition during the loading process. Several pneumonia cases presented during the first couple of days at sea. Post-mortems indicated that a good percentage of these animals were infected before entering the vessel due to the severity of affected lungs. Animals which needed treatment were identified and treated with a Westergun by the AAV, or stockpersons. No issues were observed, and all animals in hospital pens were cared for well. They constantly had bedding, fed pellets and chaff daily with easy access to water throughout the voyage. Where required, livestock were euthanased in a humane and timely manner by the AAV.

Approximately 200 cattle were treated for lameness, with the AAV shoeing around 100 of these as abscesses appeared under hooves due to cracks in their feet. The observer was unable to determine if these worn or cracked hooves were due to the cattle pushing their way around pens to gain access to feed or water; or whether the cattle were sourced from wet areas and having softer hooves. Cattle loaded from drier areas seemed to have no issues with lameness.

Several animals presented with bloat toward the end of the voyage with the AAV successfully treating 7 out of 10 head, with the other 3 euthanased.

There were a total of 57 mortalities on this voyage. Post-mortems were performed on the majority of mortalities, which identified the major causes as pneumonia in 16 animals and septic arthritis in 25 animals. Four mortalities were due to bloat, with the remainder attributed to either peritonitis, abomasal ulceration, downer cattle, misadventure or unknown cause.

The veterinary equipment and drug supplies were well stocked, and in accordance with ASEL requirements.

Discharge

Berthing in Novorossiysk was delayed by three days due to inclement weather the previous week causing delays. Final docking took place on 4 March 2020. Discharge took six days to complete due to the distance trucks had to commute to the feedlot.

Unloading was a slow, incident free process conducted with welfare in mind. An electrical prodder was used occasionally on stubborn animals, with lengths of poly pipe being used appropriately to move cattle along.

Animals presented in good condition with hospital penned cattle being discharged first with no issues noted. Fodder and water were available through-out the discharge 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 4 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 9 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 14 Cattle in pen—bedding applied

Day 18 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 25 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 34 Cattle in pen—no issues identified