

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Yangtze Harmony*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in February 2020

Report 215, July 2020

Voyage summary

A consignment of 3,513 cattle was loaded on the MV Yangtze Harmony at Townsville on 18 February 2020. Discharge occurred at Hon La, Vietnam, between 29 February and 1 March 2020, making this a 13 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate was 0.08% (3 mortalities). This did 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 are a summary of the key observations made and 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

Loading of cattle on the vessel was observed to take place quickly and without incident. Sawdust was applied to load ramp races during loading and in the pens of a line of extra heavy bulls.

The observer calculated that 5 of the total 8 lines of cattle were not loaded in accordance with the [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 \(version 2.3\)](#) (ASEL). Cattle were redistributed over the first few days of the voyage into vacant hospital pens to reduce the stocking density. The observer reported that the use of hospital pens did not adversely affect the ability to provide care for sick or injured cattle. Despite this redistribution, the pen area allocation especially for heifers on Deck 8 and medium bulls on Deck 6 did not meet the requirements under ASEL and exporter arrangements to provide 30% extra space for horned cattle on Deck 7.

Personnel

Two LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) accompanied the voyage, and were responsible for implementing the exporter's procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the cattle throughout the voyage.

The master and Chief Officer (CO) demonstrated leadership in directing duties and responsibilities of the crew. The crew demonstrated appropriate husbandry and management skills with consideration of the cattle.

Daily routine

Management meetings were held daily, with the CO, bosun, stockpersons and observer in attendance. Matters surrounding feed and water consumption, deck conditions, current weather reports and critical livestock management criteria were discussed.

Feed and water

The observer reported that feed and watering systems were well maintained throughout the voyage. There were no water or feed accessibility constraints despite particular lines remaining higher than the allowable stocking density under ASEL.

The amount of fodder loaded and available on the vessel was in accordance with ASEL requirements. Pelletised feed was delivered to chutes on the decks automatically, and then manually delivered by crew to each feed trough. Additional chaff was fed as required by crew to cattle in the hospital pens. The crew were seen to adhere to the feed routines established at the daily meetings.

Water was generated by two reverse osmosis systems and stored in tanks. Delivery of water to troughs was automated by a float-valve mechanism and was observed to be free of contaminants, and to flow at an acceptable rate. Water troughs were observed to frequently be knocked off rails by cattle, resulting in isolated flood events. The observer reported that this was addressed acceptably by crew and stockpersons throughout the voyage and water remained available to cattle *ad lib*.

Ventilation

The ventilation system performed without interruption on this voyage. The observer reported that the air flow in pens was perceived as adequate. All eight decks on the vessel were fully enclosed, with a combination of exhaust and supply fans that channel air through PVC piping.

Deck wet bulb temperatures averaged 28.3°C and reached a maximum of 30°C on days 4 and 6. Respiratory character was normal and there were no incidents of heat stress observed.

Pen conditions

Pen conditions were observed to deteriorate as the vessel passed the equatorial region on Day 6. The observer believed this was from a combination of leaking water pipes, unsecured water troughs knocked over and the high humidity and wet bulb temperatures on this day. The vessel was tilted portside from Day 6 to reportedly assist drainage of water from the deck. Wash-down of decks was performed on Day 7 for Decks 4-8 and on Day 9 for Decks 1-3. Sawdust was applied to remedy pen conditions as required before and after wash-down. The observer reported that

deck washing and pad maintenance was effective in improving pad conditions and no negative impact was observed on the cattle's health due to the isolated flood events.

Health and welfare

There were a total of three mortalities on this voyage. A post-mortem was performed on a steer found deceased on Day 6 and a suspected urinary tract obstruction identified as the cause of death. A downer steer was identified by the observer on Day 5 did not improve or stand despite receiving treatment in hospital and was euthanased on Day 9. Non-compliant handling was observed in an attempt made to stand this particular steer during daily status monitoring. A heavy steer identified by the observer on Day 4 was lethargic and appeared to have a broken tail. This animal did not improve and required euthanasia during the night of Day 11 as he was unable to stand during the stockperson's pre-discharge inspection.

Three cattle on Deck 7, were seen on separate occasions on Day 6 with a leg protruding from beneath the bottom rails of the pen. Two of these animals required treatment for injuries sustained from this event. A bull originating from this deck was identified on Day 8 with severely swollen fetlock. Whilst receiving treatment, the bull was later seen on Day 10 with the limb underneath the bottom pen rail. This bull was observed to improve and was discharged on Day 13.

Discharge

Stockpersons and crew were observed to work effectively to ensure the health of the cattle during the discharge period. The discharge ramp required adjustments by the crew to ensure stability during discharge.

Conclusion

Although non-compliances were identified during the voyage, the observer reported that animal health and welfare was generally managed well by the stockpersons and vessel crew.

Action

The issues raised on this voyage have been addressed with the exporter. The department has required the exporter to amend their processes on issues including management of downer animals and stocking density.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Cattle in pen—no issues identified.



Day 4—Water troughs knocked off in aisle. Subsequently resolved by crew.



Day 4 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 8 Cattle pad conditions post wash-down—no issues identified



Day 10 Cattle feeding—no issues identified



Day 11 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

