

# Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Ute*

## Cattle and buffalo exported to Indonesia in February 2020

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Report 217, July 2020

### Voyage summary

A consignment of 5,224 cattle and 355 buffalo was loaded onto the *MV Ocean Ute* at Darwin between 21 and 22 February 2020. The vessel departed on 22 February 2020. The cattle were discharged at Panjang, Indonesia between 28 and 29 February 2020, making this a 9 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.02% (1 mortality) and 0.56% for buffalo (2 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate for either species. 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

Loading went smoothly, with sawdust was spread on ramps and all animals loaded calmly with no injuries or incidents. The buffalo loaded particularly well, and were deliberately loaded at night to avoid moving them during the heat of the day. The buffalo pen densities were compliant with *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* (ASEL).

The cattle were not loaded in accordance with the load plan. They had been allocated on the load plan to pens which were wholly, or partly, unavailable due to being used for other purposes including the storage of fodder. The exporter did give some additional space to more vulnerable cattle as part of their Bovine Respiratory Disease Management plan. However, the fodder being stored in some pens resulted in some cattle not being given the pen space allocation required by ASEL.

## **Personnel**

There was an experienced LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) on board responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage. The stockperson demonstrated constant care for the animals. They were able to identify those livestock requiring attention and used low-stress stock handling techniques. The crew were observed to be competent stock handlers, and were in sufficient numbers to ensure good outcomes. They responded immediately to any issues which arose. The Chief Officer (CO) and Bosun walked checked all decks every morning and reported directly to the master.

## **Daily routine**

The stockperson checked all decks in the early morning, getting animals to their feet, and identifying any livestock displaying lameness, shy feeding or illness. The stockperson generally moved throughout all decks between 6:30am and 4:30pm, and would direct the Bosun and crew regarding feed requirements. The livestock were fed three times a day; at 7:00am, followed by a top-up at 10:30am, and an afternoon feed at 3:30pm.

## **Feed and water**

Fodder was available, in sufficient quantities, for the duration of the voyage and adequate chaff was available for all animals as required. Buffalo pens were provided with manually filled water troughs, in addition to nose bowls, to ensure any buffalo with larger horns would still be able to access water.

Water supply was adequate to fill the nose bowls; apart from certain instances which only affected nose bowls on upper Decks 6 and 7. These decks were prone to a reduction in water pressure during peak water demand on the lower decks. The CO advised that they have an alternative water source, and pumping arrangements as a contingency, in the event that the water pressure cannot meet demand for a prolonged period. The crew managed the situation satisfactorily and no adverse effects were observed.

Crew were observed to be moving around the decks regularly to clean out and re-fill water troughs which had become contaminated with feed or manure. Any shy feeders were identified by the stockperson and placed into hospital pens and treated as required.

## **Ventilation**

All pens were observed to be well ventilated. Some warmer areas on the vessel were identified, however no adverse impacts were observed.

The maximum average deck temperature, observed during the voyage, was 32°C Dry Bulb, 30°C Wet Bulb and 86% Humidity. There was very little difference (maybe 0.5°C to 1°C) between day and night temperatures in the cattle holds, and therefore, little opportunity for animals to lose their heat load overnight.

## **Pen conditions**

Pads did not require wash-down and the crew spread sawdust and feed waste over any pens which were becoming sloppy. All decks were well maintained, with the pad comfortable for animals to lie on.

The buffalo had ample pen space and were observed to be comfortable throughout the voyage.

The stockperson would often leave up to 3 gates open between pens which allowed greater freedom of movement. The higher pen densities, and gates being left open, created difficulties for the observer to count animals and verify numbers against the load plan in those pens. The livestock were observed to distribute themselves evenly throughout pens without preventing access to feed and water.

### **Health and welfare**

Four cattle and 2 buffalo were placed in hospital pens during the voyage for treatment. They were treated for lameness, or as a precaution for either Bovine Respiratory Disease or pneumonia.

On 29 February 2020, one of the cattle was euthanased by the stockperson due to the animal being lame and assessed as not being able to recover in time to be discharged. The 2 buffalo mortalities were attributed to pneumonia following post-mortem examination.

There were no stress indicators and animals were observed to be comfortable at night. Post-mortem examinations were always conducted where practical. Mortalities were observed to be removed from pens and disposed of as soon as possible.

### **Discharge**

The buffalo were discharged first, after sawdust was spread on all the ramps. Discharge was completed without incident on 29 February 2020. All livestock were observed as having been fed and were eating well with access to water during discharge.

### **Conclusion**

Animal welfare outcomes were observed to be good throughout the voyage. There was some added discomfort and heat load associated with reduced pen space allocations. However, the consignment consisted of tropically acclimatised livestock, and there were no adverse impacts or livestock stress observed on this voyage.

Other than the reduced pen space allocations, the exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment has addressed issues with the exporter related to the load plan, where space allocated to livestock was subsequently used to store fodder.

## Representative photographs of the voyage

**Day 3 Buffalo in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 4 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 5 Buffalo in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 6 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**



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



**Day 9 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**

