

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Girolando Express*

Cattle exported to China in October 2018

Report 26, September 2019

Voyage summary

The MV *Girolando Express* commenced loading of 3,436 cattle on 23 October 2018 and departed Portland, Victoria in the morning of 24 October 2018 destined for Tianjin, China. The voyage completed discharge on 10 November 2018, making this a 19 day voyage.

The independent observer (observer) joined the vessel in Portland.

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.23% (8 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the observer from loading in Portland until discharge at Tianjin, China. This summary has been approved by the observer who accompanied this voyage.

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 contingency plans.

Loading

The cattle were loaded in accordance with the load plan and the space allocated compliant with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* (ASEL). During the voyage, the stockperson opened gates between pens and used any empty hospital pens to provide the maximum available area to the livestock. The increase in space often meant that 90 to 100% of the cattle in an area could lie down at the same time and provided access to additional water bowls and feed troughs.

Personnel

A total of 29 crew were on-board during the voyage. The master and chief officer (CO) have extensive experience with livestock voyages. The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) was diligent and provided high level of care for the cattle.

Daily routine

Daily meetings were held each morning with the master, CO, bosun, stockperson and the observer to discuss weather forecast, expected date of arrival, conditions and wash down schedules, fodder and water consumption, general health and treatments or mortalities.

The stockperson inspected cattle at least three times per day. Any sick cattle found were either treated in the pen or if required, were moved to a hospital pen. The pen and feeding arrangements were amended if shy feeders were detected. The stockperson relationship with the crew and officers was excellent.

Three night watch crew were rostered on each night to monitor the livestock and report any issues detected to the Bridge. The stockperson was available 24 hours a day to rectify any issues. Several times on the voyage, the stockperson was required to rectify issues during the night watch period.

Feed and water

The amount of fodder loaded was in accordance with feeding at a rate of 2.5% of body weight for a 16 day voyage plus three days contingency. The crew commenced feeding pellets daily at 7:00am. A second pellet feeding was undertaken between 1:00pm and 3:00pm. Chaff was fed from Day 2 to the pregnant cattle and as required to improve appetite for all the livestock and to prevent bloat.

The vessel has an automatic watering system. Water was available ad lib from nose bowls. The crew check the water pressure and cleanliness on four hour shifts every 24 hours. Water checks continued during the discharge process ensuring the cattle had clean water available at all times.

Ventilation

The on-board ventilation system delivers air to each pen by pipes with strategically located outlet holes. The ventilation performed very well throughout the voyage. No signs of heat stress were detected during the voyage.

Pen conditions

All decks were washed on Day 9/10 and Day 14 of the voyage. In the days leading up to the first wash, some pens in the lower two decks had pad conditions that were wet, sloppy and deep. However the cattle were bright and eating well. Sawdust bedding was placed in each pen after the two washes.

Health and welfare

The temperature and relative humidity readings were recorded at around 9.30am every day. On several days the temperatures were low 30's (dry bulb) and high 20's (wet bulb). No signs of heat stress were observed during the voyage.

A small number of cattle were treated for injuries, pink eye or illness with varying responses. The main causes of mortalities on the voyage were recorded as pneumonia or misadventure.

Conclusion

Overall, the cattle travelled well and were discharged in good condition. The observer noted the stockperson was diligent and provided high level of care for the cattle and the officers, stockperson and crew relationships were excellent which contributed to the good condition of the livestock at discharge.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 4 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 6 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 6 Cattle in pen – wet pad conditions



Day 11 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 14 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 15 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

