

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Yangtze Fortune*

Cattle exported to China in March 2019

Report 92, October 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 2,772 cattle were loaded on the *MV Yangtze Fortune* at the Port of Fremantle between 9 and 10 March 2019. The vessel departed on 10 March 2019. The vessel discharged the cattle at the Port of Huanghua, China between 24 and 25 March 2019, making this a 17 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.22% (6 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 the 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 cattle management from loading through to discharge, including contingencies.

Loading

The vessel was loaded in accordance with the load plan and without incident. All pens and ramps were covered in sawdust prior to loading. The observer noted the pen space allocated was sufficient, and in accordance with *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)) requirements. Fodder and water were observed in the troughs at the time of loading.

Personnel

An experienced LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanied the voyage. The stockperson was responsible for ensuring the cattle had satisfactory provisions such as food, water, treatments, ventilation and pads.

The bosun supervised the crew and worked with them in the cargo holds. The observed noted that some of the crew were inexperienced and displayed some uncertainty when dealing with the cattle and took unnecessary risks, such as getting into the pens with “stirred-up” stock, to perform tasks that could have been performed from outside the pen, however, there were no animal welfare issues noted.

Daily routine

Management meetings were held each day in the bridge and were attended by the Chief Officer (CO), stockperson and the bosun. The attendees discussed fodder calculations, daily reports, instructions regarding movement of cattle and the welfare of the cattle. The stockperson instructed the bosun which cattle needed to be moved or given extra feed and which pads required the application of sawdust.

Cattle were fed twice daily; at 7:00am and 3:30pm. Pens of cattle identified with “big eaters” were given a top up of fodder at 10:30am. The stockperson inspected all the cattle decks in the morning and afternoon and treatments were administered in the afternoon.

Night watchpersons operated in 4 hour shifts. Their duties included checking the water troughs, monitoring the welfare of the cattle, updating the officer on watch, and filling out the watch log.

Feed and water

Pelleted fodder was held in three large silos on board the vessel. Fodder was distributed from chutes into feed troughs using plastic buckets. As the voyage progressed the fodder and chaff were increased at the request of the stockperson.

Two reverse osmosis desalination plants provided fresh drinking water to float activated water troughs located on the outside rails of the pens. On day 2 of the voyage, several floats were observed to be broken but the cattle still had access to water. The issue was raised at the daily management meeting and maintenance was carried out.

At various times during the voyage the observer noted there were issues with the cleaning of water troughs. This issue was raised at the daily meetings and over the course of the voyage the cleaning regime improved. The observer noted the cattle had adequate access to feed and water for the duration of the voyage.

Ventilation

The ventilation system functioned consistently and effectively during the voyage. Adequate thermoregulation of cattle was observed.

The temperature and humidity remained consistent from day 3 – 12, as mild equatorial conditions were experienced. The average morning dry bulb temperature were 30°C, with an average humidity reading of 78%. On day 12 the temperatures dropped to 12°C as the voyage drew closer to its destination.

Pen conditions

The pads remained mostly dry and appeared acceptable on the bottom five decks during the voyage. Fodder and chaff that was not consumed, or had spilt into walkways, was emptied back into the pens daily and this was beneficial to the condition of the pads.

On day 3, around half of the pen pads on Deck 7 port side were observed to be wet and sloppy due to cattle chewing on the trough hoses and the hoses leaking. Corrective action was taken by the crew.

On day 4, some pads were observed to be very wet and sloppy as rain had leaked into the pens. The crew made repairs, cleaned the pens and applied sawdust. Pad conditions were again acceptable.

Wash down of the decks was spread over 3 days on this voyage and was observed to be stress free for the cattle. The stockperson conducted a thorough inspection of legs and feet for wounds and swelling after the completion of the deck wash out.

Health and Welfare

The observer noted that during the voyage cattle identified with an injury, illness or other ailment were given prompt treatment by the stockperson and routinely monitored. The stockperson administering the treatments was observed to be efficient and effective and ensured minimal stress to the cattle.

During the voyage, the main injuries, illness or ailments observed were lameness, hematomas, swelling of leg joints, abrasions and some respiratory disorders. Cattle identified as being in discomfort, were transferred into hospital pens, treated, monitored and allowed to recover. Sixty percent of treatments were for injuries and lameness, whilst the other 40% were for Bovine Respiratory Disease.

There were 6 mortalities during the voyage. Two non-importing country protocol cattle were inadvertently loaded and were required to be euthanised. An animal was euthanised when it was unable to be unloaded and another was smothered to death during the discharge. Three other cattle died during the voyage due to causes including a suspected lung disorder and from unknown causes.

Discharge

Overall, discharge was completed in a timely manner. Other than the 2 mortalities, no welfare issues were noted by the observer.

At the time of discharge the observer noted that drinker valves were not turning off which caused a large amount of water to spill into the pens onto the pads of other cattle and into walkways and areas of work. The master assured the observer the valves would all be replaced.

Conclusion

The observer noted the cattle had access to quality fodder and water throughout the voyage. Although some minor issues were identified during the voyage and discharge, the stockperson and crew worked well together and were dedicated to their duties and the overall well-being of the cattle.

The loading, voyage and discharge processes and procedures were generally maintained and in accordance with the ASEL requirements.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 5 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 7 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 9 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 15 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 16 cattle in pen—no issues identified

