

# **VALE COMMENT ON IO 142 Bison Express Darwin to Philippines June 2019**

## **Loading**

IO SUMMARY: There were two issues regarding stock movement during loading. The first issue was with the loading ramp where it met the ship. The area was too wide which allowed cattle to double up or turn around, and there was a large step down from the ramp to the deck which contributed to cattle falling down.

The second issue was with the ramp from the top deck onto Deck 4 which was very slippery, with little to no grip for the cattle. The observer commented that sawdust had been applied on several occasions during loading, but that the sawdust slid down the ramp with the cattle.

VALE COMMENT: this ship often leaves from Darwin Port – it is odd that this has not been noted previously. However some Darwin loading issues have been noted previously.

IO SUMMARY: The observer noted that feed and water was provided to the cattle 16 hours (other than Deck 4) after the commencement of loading. This does not comply with ASEL which requires livestock to be provided feed and water within 12 hours from the commencement of loading.

VALE COMMENT: ASEL non-compliance

IO SUMMARY: As a follow up to loading ramp issues, the department advised the exporter of an upcoming voyage of the potential issues with the ramps. The exporter has since advised the department that loading was completed without incident.

VALE COMMENT: that is so reassuring – did the Dept check this or rely on the exporter's assurance? The whole point of IOs being in place was because exporters could not be trusted.

## **Personnel**

IO SUMMARY: The crew had varying degrees of expertise and experience in the handling of cattle, with some being very experienced while others were very inexperienced.

VALE COMMENT: not surprising

## **Daily routine**

IO SUMMARY: The nightwatch consisted of 2 crew, one from 6:00pm to 12:00am and the other from 12:00am to 6:00am. The responsibilities of the night watchman were to maintain water bowls and to monitor cattle.

VALE COMMENT: 1 person for a whole ship full of animals

## **Feed and water**

IO SUMMARY: Fodder quantities loaded were in excess of the ASEL requirement for the planned voyage. Due to a delay in the berthing of the vessel at the discharge port, the majority of the fodder on board was utilized.

VALE COMMENT: another voyage that "sailed close to the wind" with respect to food adequacy and unexpected delays

IO SUMMARY: Feed availability was reduced in pens where troughs were contaminated by refuse from the deck above. The observer noted the crew attempted to rectify this issue by placing troughs on the upper rails to catch the falling debris. However, this was not consistently applied and was not effective in stopping contamination.

VALE COMMENT: contaminated food

## **Ventilation**

IO SUMMARY: Ventilation was generally effective on all decks however the pad condition was variable across and within the decks. Ventilation to pens was fair.

VALE COMMENT: “fair”

IO SUMMARY: Pens to the rear of the vessel, particularly on Deck 4, where notably hotter and the pads in these areas indicated the higher heat by their dryness. Cattle in these pens were not displaying any visible signs of heat stress.

VALE COMMENT: no mention of temperature measurements.

### **Pen conditions**

IO SUMMARY: The pad conditions varied throughout the ship and for the majority of the voyage, most pads were in reasonable condition.

VALE COMMENT: “most pads” – this report seems to be hinting more than detailing extent of problems

IO SUMMARY: On day 7 the ship was delayed at anchor in Subic Bay as no berth was available. A number of pads deteriorated rapidly, and were in bad condition by the time of discharge. One wet pen in particular was impacting on the welfare of the stock. The animals in this pen were not seen to lie down once the pad condition reached this stage. Wash down of the pens was not permitted, as the vessel was too close to shore. However, neither the application of bedding, nor any other action, was undertaken to improve the pad condition in these pens.

VALE COMMENT: shoddy and unacceptable animal management from the “experienced stockperson”

IO SUMMARY: There were a number of gates which could not be done up properly and gate hinge points that had sheared off completely which had the potential to injure the cattle, although no specific health or welfare issues were noted.

VALE COMMENT: photograph also shows broken gate blocking access to water.

### **Health and welfare**

IO SUMMARY: Some cattle presented with lameness and wounds. This included over 20 cattle with hematomas observed after Day 4. Most of these were located on the hip area, particularly on the point of the rump. One had a puncture wound associated with it. These cattle were able to be discharged.

VALE COMMENT: there is no information as to how this happened. Could these have been loading injuries?

### **Discharge**

IO SUMMARY: Discharge commenced at 8:30pm, 15 June 2019, and was completed at 1:05 am, 17 June 2019. **The stockperson was not present on the vessel between approximately 9:00pm 15 June 2019 and 6:00am 16 June 2019.** This is a non-compliance with ASEL standard S5.1 which requires the stockperson to remain on-board the vessel until the completion of discharge at the final port. The non-compliance is currently under review by the Department of Agriculture. The IO reported that there were no animal welfare issues observed while the stockperson was absent from the vessel.

VALE COMMENT: even with an IO onboard, exporter employed personnel flout the rules. This is a major non-compliance and totally unacceptable given the state of the pads, the dwindling food supply etc.

IO SUMMARY: During discharge feed and water were maintained to the cattle, other than during one period when repairs were being made due to a water leak. No other issues were reported.

VALE COMMENT: no times of water deprivation provided.

### **Conclusion**

Although the voyage was successful, there were some area requiring further improvement.

**Representative photographs of the voyage**

Day 5 Broken gate blocking access to nose bowl