VALE COMMENT ON IO 63 Rahmeh Fremantle to Vietnam Jan 2019.

Loading
IO SUMMARY: The cattle were loaded in accordance with the load plan. Where possible, the number of cattle in the pens was adjusted during the voyage. The observer noted that some pens on the lower decks were more tightly penned than those on Decks 5 – 8 where the cattle were allocated more space. The observer added that overall, ASEL's minimum requirements had been met, but that some pens were close to the ASEL limits.
VALE COMMENT: given that ASEL space allowances are not generous, this tight packing of cattle is potentially an animal welfare concern.

Daily routine
IO SUMMARY: Information was not always available or clearly communicated due to the language barrier between the stockperson and the vessel officers.
VALE COMMENT: there should always be someone present on these ships with an appropriate command of English.

Feed and Water
IO SUMMARY: As the cattle were on board the vessel for longer than planned, the feed was rationed for the last few days of the voyage. The observer noted that on these days competition for feed increased when the rationed portion was delivered. Some cattle continued to look for food when the troughs were empty but most appeared satisfied.
VALE COMMENT: insufficient food has occurred on a number of IO voyages. This deficiency has not historically been recognised other than confidential information shared with VALE from onboard veterinarians.

Ventilation
IO SUMMARY: The enclosed lower decks numbered 1 to 3 were well ventilated by ducted air and industrial fans and the cattle did not exhibit any signs of heat stress. At one end of Deck 2 the temperature was felt to be warmer as the pens were adjacent to the engine room.
Deck 4 recorded higher temperatures at around 30°C dry bulb. This was partly due to a large exhaust air duct from the engine room blowing hot air into one part of the deck. The Box taurus cross type cattle stowed in pens adjacent to the duct on Deck 4 displayed respiratory characteristics between normal and slight panting during the voyage except when the vessel was in port and the engine was idling.
VALE SUMMARY: it is likely that some degree of heat stress was present in this *Bos* (not Box) *taurus* cattle

IO SUMMARY: The upper, open decks (5, 6, 7 and 8) were also ventilated by ducted air and industrial fans. Combined with natural airflow, the upper decks did not record temperatures above 29°C dry bulb during the voyage.
VALE COMMENT: upper decks routinely seem to perform better.

IO SUMMARY: There was one fixed thermometer per deck which was read at 12:00pm each day by the CO or his representative.
VALE COMMENT: once daily measurement only.

Pen conditions
IO SUMMARY: Pens in Decks 4, 5, 6 and 7 became wet and sloppy from sea water inundation resulting from the large swell during the voyage.
VALE COMMENT: inherent risk with live export by sea.

IO SUMMARY: The pad on most decks built up during the first six days of the voyage and developed to about 15cm depth before wash down on day 7.
VALE COMMENT: if this pad was boggy, then animal welfare could have been compromised. No details provided.

IO SUMMARY: Decks 1 - 3 were washed down on day 8. By the final discharge, the pads were 25 – 30cm deep and were boggy.
VALE COMMENT: this is a welfare issue.

Health and welfare
IO SUMMARY: There were 11 mortalities during the voyage. Most mortalities were attributable to sudden death with unexplained causes.
VALE COMMENT: causes very rarely identified when voyages not accompanied by a veterinarian.

IO SUMMARY: Two cattle died from injuries received when their heads were caught in pen rails.
VALE COMMENT: no comment as to whether design flaw or just misadventure but odd that there should be two as this is an uncommonly cited cause of death.

IO SUMMARY: Approximately 200 cattle were treated for lameness during the voyage. Affected cattle were showing signs very early in the voyage. The factors contributing to the large number of lame cattle was not definitively determined but was attributed to a combination of the slightly abrasive pen surface, bouts of rough weather and water inundation, grain-rich feed pellets, confinement, extended voyage length and preload factors.
VALE COMMENT: boggy pens would not have helped. This is a very high rate of lameness. Preload factors were not identified but are concerning as ASEL stipulates that cattle must be healthy for loading AND there have been significant high mortality voyages due to unacceptable preload factors. It is of interest that lameness issues were identified early in voyage, again highlighting potential for preload factors.

IO SUMMARY: Towards the end of the voyage, some of the cattle had difficulty getting up and moving about in the confined pen space when the pad became boggy.
VALE COMMENT: significant animal welfare concern. These animals had bogging.

IO SUMMARY: The stockpersons and crew were observed using low stress stock handling methods. They were patient and skilled while working with cattle. One exception was noted when crew members were observed to temporarily force cattle from two pens into one to remove a carcass.

Conclusion
IO SUMMARY: The voyage was scheduled as a short haul voyage. Due to delays experienced by the vessel on entering the ports of discharge, the cattle spent a longer period of time on the vessel than anticipated. The observer noted that rationing of fodder in the last few days of the voyage resulted in increased competition for fodder.
Adverse pen conditions were observed early in the voyage on Decks 4 and 5 due to sea inundation. Later in the voyage the pad became deep and boggy. Some cattle had difficulty getting up and moving about in the confined pen space when the pad became boggy.
Throughout the voyage, around 200 cattle were treated for leg or lameness issues. …The lameness issue was evident early in the voyage but the factors that contributed to the lameness was not definitively determined. Whilst the mortality rate was below the reportable level specified in the ASEL, the high incidence of lameness and leg issues may have been a factor in the voyage mortality rate.

Bos taurus type cattle on Deck 4 showed increased respiratory rate. A large exhaust air duct was noted as blowing hot air into one part of Deck 4. No other signs of heat stress were noted by the observer.
VALE COMMENT: a very miserable voyage for many cattle.

Representative photographs of the voyage
VALE COMMENT: photographs were not representative as they did not display the bogging that was described.