

Media release

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Cattle sent on 22-day voyage with 19 days' worth of food

While all the focus has been on live export of sheep to the Middle East, the shocking voyages for cattle from Victoria to China have been overlooked. A voyage where food supply was underestimated is just one of the recent disasters.

On 31 May 2018, Phoenix Exports exported cattle from Portland to China on the *Dareen* and had a high mortality voyage. 1.45% (46/3180) cattle died, with heat stress believed to be a major factor. The department required an independent observer for the next voyage from Portland to China. This voyage on the *Yangtze Fortune* also recorded a reportable mortality incident, with 33 cattle believed to have died. Twelve months later, no investigation reports are available for either voyage. The independent observer report is also unavailable.

VALE spokesperson Dr Sue Foster said that AMSA inspected the *Yangtze Fortune* on its return and found problems.

“AMSA ordered modifications to be made and stated that the vessel was not suited to voyages of more than 10 days. Then they examined the sister ship, the *Yangtze Harmony*, just before it left with cattle for China from Fremantle and found that its ventilation was not working. It was allowed to leave after these were rectified but the independent observer found significant issues with the water troughs,” said Dr Foster.

“Then in August 2018, the *Gloucester Express* had a 20-day voyage to China, with insufficient food loaded for the voyage. It got worse. In November 2018, the *Ocean Ute* had a 22-day voyage to China with only 19 days' worth of food. Not only was there insufficient food to feed ill cattle but there were rough seas and temperatures ranging from above the *Bos taurus* heat stress threshold to freezing on arrival.

“Voyage after voyage was allowed from southern Victoria to China despite this issue. It appears that each voyage had some degree of heat stress in addition to other problems. And yet no veterinarian is required for these voyages.

“Historically, veterinarians have been required for voyages of longer than 10 days. The Department changed this once trade opened up to Vietnam and China. Veterinarians are not required on voyages to China, which can take just as long to complete as a voyage to the Middle East.

“With the sheep trade in tatters, one would hope that both the industry and the Department would be meticulous on cattle voyages. Instead it appears that they have dropped the ball,” said Dr Foster.

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