



**Australian Government**

**Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service**

## **Investigation into the reportable cattle reportable mortality level in the voyage from Wyndham to Pasar Gudang, Malaysia October 2006**

### **1. Purpose**

To report on the investigation into the cause of the mortalities of cattle loaded on 28 October 2006 and to make recommendations with the aim of preventing a recurrence.

### **2. Summary**

The cause of the high number of mortalities was investigated. There were 15 deaths from the 2374 cattle loaded and two deaths of the 153 buffalo loaded. The main cause in the older bulls was recumbency and required euthanasia or stubborn bulls which were unable to be moved. The mortality for this consignment was 0.63%. The trigger for a reportable mortality event for a short haul voyage is 0.5%.

### **3. Background**

This investigation into the mortality was carried out by reviewing the following information:

1. accredited stockman end of voyage report
2. report from the exporter.
3. Notice of Intention and Consignment risk management plan from the exporter.

### **Summary of mortalities**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action / Deaths</b>	<b>Cause of death</b>
Day 1	Loading	
Day 1	1 heavy shorthorn bull	Weak and downer
Day 2	1 heavy shorthorn bull	Fractured leg - euthanased
Day 3	nil	
Day 4	2 buffalo	unknown
Day 5	2 heavy shorthorn bull	Weak and downers
Discharge	11 bulls	Unable to be discharged

The exporter reports that the bulls which died on the vessel went down in their pens and were unable to rise. The 11 bulls which were recorded as mortalities at discharge were euthanased because either of 2 categories as follows:

1. weak/downers for the older bulls
2. Stubborn cattle unable to be discharged.

Fodder, water and on board environmental conditions were otherwise unremarkable. The exporter has reported that there was no link to the property of origin of the cattle and that the cattle which died came from several properties.

The cattle arrived at the registered premises between 20 and 27 October 2006. The Australian Standard for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) includes a domestication

period of 21 days for feral goats but does not include any domestication period for “mickey” bulls.

The reportable mortality level does not appear on the report to parliament because the information supplied to AMSA did not include the euthanasia of 11 bulls unable to be discharged.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The contributing causes to the mortalities were likely to be:

1. Older larger bulls – weakness
2. Euthanasia of mickey bulls unable to be discharged

The Meat and Livestock Australia report “Investigating options to modify the aggressive behaviour of entire male cattle, sheep and goats and the potential impacts on market acceptance and animal productivity” included suggestions for handling and management strategies for cattle as follows:

1. Recently captured semi feral “mickey” bulls should be restrained in yards provided with feed and water and minimally disturbed for up to 48 hours prior to trucking to the export holding yard.
2. During pre-shipment and during induction periods, cattle should be frequently handled through yards using low stress handling techniques avoiding the use of dogs, whips and electric prodders.
3. During both pre shipment and on board, animals should be grouped on a size/weight basis
4. Aggressive behaviour is a greater problem when nutrition is limiting and adequate, good quality diets must be available.

#### **5. Recommendations**

1. AAV and AQIS veterinarians closely scrutinize the export of bulls to reduce the chance of mortalities.
2. Bulls with abnormal or aggressive behaviour are excluded from consignments

#### **Actions:**

Additional conditions were placed on consignments 2 consignments exported as follows:

1. AQIS accredited veterinarian to accompany the consignment.

The results of the voyages were as follows:

mortalities	Number of cattle loaded	Mortality rate
1	1308	0.08%
0	2237	0%

Two further consignment had additional conditions including:

1. the livestock were held in the registered premises for at least 3 clear days.
2. the livestock are given 10% extra space above the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock requirements.

3. When the ship has been loaded to approximately 95% of the estimated capacity, loading ceases until the weight of the loaded cattle has been calculated, and the number of animals required to achieve the vessel's designated load capacity has been determined and that an AQIS representative has given approval for loading to continue.

The results of the voyages were as follows:

mortalities	Number of cattle loaded	Mortality rate
2	2830	0.07%
2	2241	0.09%