

# Independent Observer summary report on MV Rahmeh (Gulf Livestock 1)

## Cattle exported to China in April 2019

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Report 109, October 2019

### Voyage summary

A consignment of 5,847 cattle were loaded onto the MV Rahmeh in Portland on 8 and 9 April 2019. The departure from Portland was delayed until 10 April 2019 due to port congestion. The cattle were discharged from the vessel at the Port of Huanghua, China on 27 and 28 April 2019 making this a 21 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for cattle was 0.085 % (5 cattle). The mortality rate does not exceed the reportable level. The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The name of the vessel was changed en route, from MV *Rahmeh* to MV *Gulf Livestock 1*.

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 livestock management from loading through to discharge, including contingencies.

#### Loading

No issues were identified during the loading process, with ample resources and good facilities.

The vessel was not was loaded to full capacity and cattle pen density was observed at or below *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL)* requirements.

#### Personnel

One Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and two LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) accompanied the livestock on the voyage. The experienced AAV and stockpersons dealt with the range of environmental conditions during the voyage and directed the crew to improve welfare outcomes for the livestock.

## **Daily routine**

The daily management meeting was held at 10:00am with the AAV, two stockpersons, the observer and Chief Officer (CO) usually present. It was noted on a number of occasions that the CO was absent from these meetings and did not provide a crew representative to attend on his behalf. When this happened it was necessary for the AAV to meet with the CO at some other time during the morning or speak directly to the master. On occasion, the AAV provided written daily instruction to the CO or the master.

Two crew were rostered on for the night watch period each night. One crew member was designated solely for livestock duties while the other night crew member assisted when not required to complete other seaman duties. The observer undertook a number of stock inspections during the night on this voyage and found on all occasions the crew carrying out their required duties.

## **Feed and water**

The normal daily feed routine was pellets at 7:00am and 3:30pm and chaff / hay at 1:00pm. This routine was varied on a number of occasions by the AAV based on scheduled wash down, pad condition and the category of livestock.

The feed and water systems worked without fault, water troughs were cleaned out twice daily and the round-lipped feed bins stayed on the square rails with the addition of a simple bolt and washer.

Feeding and watering of the cattle were observed to meet ASEL requirements.

## **Ventilation**

Throughout the voyage, the environmental conditions varied widely from cool conditions on departure from Portland (around 17° C dry bulb), to warm and humid conditions around the equator (30°C – 33°C dry bulb with 80 – 85% humidity), to very cold conditions (10°C – 14°C dry bulb) on arrival in China.

Daily temperatures were recorded with wet and dry bulb thermometers on each deck. The observer found a number of wet bulb thermometers had not been aligned correctly giving inaccurate readings. A thermometer was replaced following a request from the observer.

The hottest areas on the vessel were adjacent to the engine room on Deck 2 and all of Deck 4.

The below deck ventilation (supply and exhaust fans) on Decks 1, 2 and 3 functioned well except for two pens adjacent to the engine room on Deck 2.

Livestock on Deck 4 were observed with increased respiratory rates during the warmer periods of the voyage. A number of measures were implemented to reduce the adverse impact of the warmer conditions on Deck 4 including installing additional fans, placing three additional air ducts directing airflow to specific pens, reducing livestock numbers, implementing a different feeding regime on this deck and moving bulky feed and bedding stores from passageways to increase air flow. The observer noted these processes assisted to resolve the increased respiratory rate.

Open Decks 5 - 8 had temperatures around 3°C cooler than enclosed deck temperatures during the warmer part of the voyage. The vessel encountered higher winds than expected off the coast of North Queensland and the New Hebrides which assisted in keeping the temperature milder than normal.

### **Pen conditions**

Pad conditions were generally good. All decks except Deck 4 were washed twice on the 18 - 19 April and the 25 - 26 April 2019.

When the pad condition of some pens near the engine room on Deck 2 was found to deteriorate, the stockperson responded by manually cleaning out these pens and applying additional sawdust.

Deck 4 had a liquid pad observed on a number of occasions. Deck 4 received three washes during the voyage on the 19, 22 and 25 April 2019 and had additional sawdust applied to the pens. These measures improved the pad condition and there were no impacts on animal welfare.

Sea water inundation occurred affecting Deck 4 and 5 during rough weather. Crew responded by removing the water and an application of sawdust to manage the pen conditions.

### **Health and welfare**

During the voyage, the AAV and stockpersons provided treatments for bloat, pink eye, lameness, shy feeders, leg wounds, leg swelling, ill-thrift, nasal discharge, respiratory symptoms, pneumonia and endometritis.

There were 5 mortalities for the voyage. The cause of death of 2 animals was not definitively established. Two other animals were euthanased due to leg injuries and a further animal was euthanased as it failed to respond to treatment for ketosis.

### **Discharge**

Discharge went smoothly with ample resources and good facilities.

### **Conclusion**

The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.

Additional measures were implemented on Decks 2 and 4 to manage heat stress and pen conditions.

## Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 5 Cattle in pen no issues identified



Day 11 Cattle in pen – after deck wash



Day 14 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 17 Cattle in pen - before deck wash



Day 16 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 21 Cattle unloading – no issues identified

