

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Yangtze Fortune*

Cattle exported to China in April 2019

Report 111, December 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 4,769 cattle was loaded onto the MV *Yangtze Fortune* at Portland between 16 and 17 April 2019. The vessel departed in the morning of 17 April 2019. The vessel discharged the cattle at the Port of Tianjin, China between 4 and 5 May 2019, making this a 20 day voyage.

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

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.12% (6 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments represents a summary of key observations and have been approved by the observer who accompanied this 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 and contingencies.

Loading

The process of loading was observed for about 30% of the cattle by the observer. The cattle loaded well and it was noted that the animals walked to their pens relatively easily. The cattle were not loaded in accordance with the load plan, however, adjustments were made to pen density over the first few days of the voyage to comply with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* (ASEL) requirements. The crew involved in the loading process were very calm and handled the cattle calmly and without causing undue stress. There were no significant injuries noted during loading and initial penning of the cattle.

Personnel

There were two LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) on board who were responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage.

Both the crew and the stockpersons were competent and well versed in animal handling, welfare and husbandry techniques. They showed diligence, patience, good work ethic and openness to suggestions throughout the voyage.

The Chief Officer (CO) was responsible for the daily activities on the vessel. The Bosun was responsible scheduling feeds, collation of temperature and humidity figures, and staff allocation.

The stockpersons and the crew applied the standards of ASEL and all other exporter arrangements during the voyage.

Daily routine

A management meeting was held each day and was attended by the stockpersons, bosun, master, CO, and the observer. Issues discussed included feed and water calculations, temperature and humidity readings, treatments and the pen conditions.

The livestock crew were responsible for feeding chaff and pellets to the livestock, ensuring water troughs were clean and functional, keeping passageways and other thoroughfares clean, liaising with the bosun about feed, maintenance of the pads with sawdust application and reporting any ailments to the stockpersons or the bosun.

Two nightwatch crew each worked one of two 6 hour night shifts between 6:00pm and 6:00am to maintain systems, water supply and quality, conducting repairs and reporting any issues.

Feed and water

The cattle were fed pellets three times a day, chaff twice per day with the pregnant heifers receiving an extra feed each day. The observer noted that although not all the animals had trough access in the pen at the same time, the animals all seemed well fed. However, the stockperson identified any thin animals and segregated them for management in the hospital pens.

The observer noted that a number of instances where feed troughs were knocked off the pen's rails, restricting access to feed during that feed period. However, the crew were observed picking up dislodged troughs and regularly maintaining feeds throughout the day and night.

Water was available ad lib, except when troughs were knocked off the pen rails. In these instances the crew responded quickly and water was restored to the pens as per the ASEL requirements. Cleaning of faecal material from the troughs was regularly undertaken by the crew, including night watch crew, working between feeding times to complete this task.

Ventilation

The ventilation system worked effectively throughout the entire voyage. Ventilation was delivered and evenly distributed throughout each pen.

Temperature readings were taken once per day and the maximum recorded was 32 °C dry bulb and 30 °C wet bulb.

Pen conditions

Pen conditions deteriorated markedly after the first deck washout on days 8 and 9 and lasted until the second wash out on days 14 and 15. The observer commented that faulty water pipes

and water troughs, poor pen drainage, and the humid conditions were considered to be the major contributors to poor pen conditions. Drainage of excess fluid through bilge pumps and addition of sawdust were undertaken to improve conditions, however, these actions had limited effect. The pad conditions improved significantly after the second deck washout. The prolonged liquid pad conditions caused lameness in a significant number of animals.

Health and welfare

There were 6 mortalities during the voyage. Frothy bloat as a result of a change in feed was suspected to be the cause of 4 mortalities. The other two animals were humanely euthanised due to broken and dislocated limbs.

A number of animals (over 170 animals) required treatments for lameness, eye infections, limb infections, and respiratory signs. Lameness made up the majority of the issues requiring treatment and were managed case by case with anti-inflammatories and antibiotics. All treatments were recorded as per the ASEL requirements.

The temperatures were hot and humid in the equatorial zones and some of the animals (approximately 10%) were observed with slight panting. Temporary feed reduction was used effectively to manage heat load.

Discharge

The discharge was long but without incident. The health and welfare of the cattle was maintained throughout the process.

Conclusion

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

Action

Since this voyage, the exporter has been required to implement a pad condition management plan as part of their Approved Arrangement. The department will continue to assess the effectiveness of these actions.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 4 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 6 Cattle in pen—trough knocked off rail



Day 9 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 12 Cattle in pen— wet pad condition



Day 15 Cattle in pen— wet pad condition



Day 18 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

