

# Independent Observer summary report on *MV OCEAN UTE*

## Cattle exported to Vietnam in May 2019

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Report 122, November 2019

### Voyage summary

A consignment of 4,537 cattle was loaded onto the MV Ocean Ute at Townsville, Australia on 5 May 2019. The cattle were discharged at Thi Vai General, Vietnam on 17 and 18 May 2019 making this a 13 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.15% (7 cattle). 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 represent 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, including contingencies.

#### Loading

A load plan was sighted and was deemed compliant with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)). Loading of cattle was as dictated by the load plan and the pen space allowed 70% of cattle to lie down at any one time. There were no health or welfare issues observed at loading or when assessing pen density.

#### Personnel

The master was highly organised and instructed staff continuously in regard to on-board vessel management. Deck crew were assigned to care for and control cattle. Work instructions (WI) were available and the Chief Officer (CO) would liaise with the bosun to ensure work was completed in accordance with the WIs. The bosun was hard working and assisted the crew.

Two LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) accompanied the voyage who were responsible for the implementation of the exporter's arrangements to manage the health and

welfare of the cattle. A third stockperson accompanied the voyage for the purpose of conducting research.

### **Daily routine**

A meeting was held daily at 10:00am to discuss management of the voyage including estimated time of arrival, fodder consumption/delivery plans, water consumption, weight calculations, conditions (temperature and humidity), animal welfare, injuries and illnesses, cattle relocations, ongoing housekeeping and pad maintenance. The CO and bosun would explain meeting outcomes and the deck crew were provided work instructions the following morning at the 6:45am meeting.

Cattle observations were undertaken 4 times a day by the stockpersons. Stockpersons would prompt cattle to stand and walk each day to observe for lameness or injury, and would provide treatment as required. The CO completed daily checks of animal welfare, pad conditions, housekeeping, fodder, water and pen conditions.

Night watchpersons covered four - 4 hour shifts per night, from 4:00pm to 8:00am. Issues that arose were passed onto the next watchperson or, if not resolved, raised at the next meeting.

### **Feed and water**

Cattle were fed pellets 4 times daily with chaff added if needed, at a set schedule. Fodder was delivered automatically to decks and then manually transported to pens by crew. Fodder was fresh, dry and free from mould and contaminants. No shy feeders were observed throughout the voyage. Water was available ad lib in troughs via an automatic float and valve system. One float and valve was found to be faulty and was repaired immediately and the trough refilled by deck crew.

Feed troughs were cleaned daily. When deck cleaning duties were required, cattle were fed and watered prior to and after cleaning with a maximum of 4 hours between feeds. Water remained available ad lib.

### **Ventilation**

A ventilation system delivered air to all decks and every pen continuously. Air was directed into each pen from holes in the large overhead pipes and was noticeable on decks. Ventilation assisted in maintaining acceptable humidity levels. No issues were noted with the ventilation system.

The temperature was recorded daily between 10:00am and 12:00pm. The average temperature was 33°C and 70% humidity.

### **Pen conditions**

Flooring comprised of anti-slip spray-on paint with grit over metal. Wood shavings were added daily for bedding and to firm and thicken pads as directed by stockpersons. After 4 days, pads became thick and some were boggy and the CO ordered deck washing. Due to the proximity to small inhabited islands along the designated route, the deck washing was a start - stop task over four days. The wash process temporarily ceased as the vessel came within 12 nautical miles of habitable land and finally ended when the vessel reached Vietnamese waters. After decks were washed, pads remained thin for the remainder of the voyage.

Lighting was sufficient and kept on constantly. Noise levels were not an issue.

### **Health and welfare**

Cattle were moved with the assistance of long PVC pipes and handling was professional with no use of excessive force.

Minor skin lesions from injuries were treated by moving affected cattle into pens with more space, to allow the skin to repair and prevent worsening due to contact from other cattle. More serious cases (swellings and infections) were moved to the hospital pen and were treated with anti-inflammatories, antibiotics and rest. Antibiotics were also used to treat respiratory disease.

There were 7 mortalities during the voyage. One of the cattle sustained a front shoulder injury during deck washing and was unable to stand and was euthanised immediately using the captive bolt. Another died in a hospital pen with the cause unable to be identified. A further 4 cattle were found dead and the cause was attributed to septic pneumonia following post mortem investigation by the head stockperson.

During discharge, one of the cattle sustained a leg injury and was euthanised immediately using the captive bolt.

### **Discharge**

The cattle were handled in accordance with ASEL during discharge. However, one animal sustained a leg injury and was euthanised immediately using the captive bolt. Local staff continued to provide feed and water to the cattle awaiting discharge as the deck crew assisted with discharge process. Cattle moved very well from the vessel to trucks.

### **Conclusion**

The observer noted that the voyage was busy with some minor mishaps which had no impact on the overall health and welfare of the cattle. The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with the ASEL requirements.

## Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 1 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 3 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 5 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 7 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 9 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 11 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

