

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ganado Express*

Cattle exported to China in May 2019

Report 136, October 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 1,832 cattle was loaded onto the *MV Ganado Express* in Fremantle on 27 May 2019. The vessel departed on 29 May 2019. The cattle were discharged at Huanghua, China on 13 – 14 June 2019 making this a 19 day voyage.

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

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 1.36% (25 mortalities). This exceeded the reportable mortality rate of 1% for cattle on a voyage over 10 days.

This voyage is the subject of a mortality investigation as it exceeded the reportable mortality level. The mortality investigation report has been published on the [department's website](#).

The following comments represent a summary of key observations and has been approved by the observer that accompanied the voyage.

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. The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)).

Loading

All pens and ramps were covered with sawdust prior to loading. The Chief Officer (CO) had overall responsibility of the loading, and the observer noted that the livestock appeared to be loaded in accordance with the load plan. Only minor discrepancies were noted in the stocking density and these were corrected by day 3 to meet ASEL requirements. The majority of livestock were able to lie down and rest at any one point in time.

Personnel

The Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) was experienced and had qualifications relevant to the role. Their responsibilities involved treatments, post-mortems and monitoring health and welfare of livestock. The observer found the AAV to be proactive, approachable and professional when conducting their duties. Livestock identified during the

voyage with an injury, illness or ailment were given prompt treatment where possible by the AAV and routinely monitored.

The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) had extensive knowledge of livestock husbandry. The stockperson provided appropriate care and management of livestock on board and was noted inspecting all decks morning and afternoon. The observer found them diligent and professional with an emphasis on the health and welfare of the livestock.

The CO was receptive to issues and queries, and proactively provided remedies. The observer noted that they were competent and diligent. The CO delivered all formal communications to the master.

Three night watch crew worked a four hour shift. Their duties included checking nose bowls and monitoring livestock welfare. The observer witnessed this was occurring at different times during the voyage.

Daily routine

A daily meeting occurred at 10:30am with the AAV, stockperson, CO and observer. During the meetings feed trends, treatments and deck wash down plans were discussed.

The livestock were fed twice a day. Between feeds, the crew would clean and refresh nose water bowls as needed as well as sweeping walkways and disposing of spilled fodder.

Feed and water

Fodder was held in two large silos. The livestock were fed twice a day at 7:30am and 3:30pm. The crew would fill a sack with fodder and manually fill feed troughs. All livestock had adequate access to feed for the entire voyage. The observer noted that the cattle had a suppressed appetite for the first 10 days of the voyage, however this improved on day 12 as the temperatures declined.

Two reverse osmosis plants provided fresh drinking water to nose bowl. Water quality was tested every 6 hours. All water bowls were cleaned and refreshed every 4 hours (including overnight). The observer noted that water pressure and access was adequate for the entire voyage. It was noted that on day 7 there were 4 – 5 dry water bowls on Deck 3. However this was rectified at the time, and no impact on health and welfare was noted.

Ventilation

At various times during the voyage, hold 3 on Decks 4 and 5 appeared to have a slightly smoky haze and the observer noted a residue on the walls of these holds on day 12. However, it was only on day 6 (day of crossing the equator) that three cattle had the highest panting scores of 2.5 in these areas. The observer noted that these panting scores were not representative of all animals on the voyage. The ventilation system was noted to function quietly, consistently and normally for the entire voyage.

Pen conditions

Sawdust was loaded in excess of ASEL requirements and was used for bedding in all pens, improving pad conditions and lining ramps and lane ways for loading and discharge. Sawdust was applied to all pens after deck wash down.

Pads remained acceptably dry for the most part of the voyage. Unconsumed or spilled fodder was emptied back into the pens which helped maintain pad conditions. Wash down occurred on day 10 and 11 and the observer found the process to be conducted with no stress to livestock. Sawdust, chaff and hay was applied to all pens after wash down.

Health and welfare

The main causes of morbidity were: bloat, ill-thrift, suspected enteritis, respiratory disease and lameness.

The main cause of mortality was gastroenteritis (16 mortalities). Post mortems were performed each day as soon as practicable by the AAV and stockperson with the observer in attendance. It was noted that the majority of the mortalities did not display symptoms of illness and appeared to be sudden deaths. Other causes of mortalities were listed as pulpy kidney, intestinal obstruction, metabolic acidosis and one down and unable to rise due to injury.

Twenty-three mortalities were observed from day 5 – 11. Temperatures on the daily reports for days 5 – 10 listed wet bulb temperatures between 26 – 27 and dry bulb of 30 – 31 (73% humidity). Most afternoons and evening temperatures were cooler because of cloud cover, and it was noted the livestock did receive respite during these periods. Temperatures after day 12 reduced substantially and mortalities seized. The observer noted that 17 mortalities were located on Deck 4 and 5 in hold 3.

Discharge

Overall the discharge was done in a very timely manner, the health and welfare of the livestock was maintained throughout the discharge process.

Other

The vessel stopped due to engine mechanical problems between 10 and 12 June 2019. When this occurred all livestock services were still operational and functioned normally and consistently. Adequate fodder remained on board and feeding was managed as normal to allow ASEL requirements to be met.

Conclusion

The exporter notified the department of the reportable incident at the time the voyage was on the water. The observer determined that the relevant procedures relating to the management of livestock exported by sea were consistent with the ASEL.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 6 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 8 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 10 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 13 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 16 cattle in pen—no issues identified

