

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Gloucester Express*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in June 2019

Report 141, October 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 2,643 cattle was loaded onto *MV Gloucester Express* at the Port of Darwin between on 8 June 2019. The vessel departed on 8 June 2019. Discharge of the cattle at the Port of Phu My, Vietnam was completed on 15 June 2019, making this an 8 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.04% (1 mortality). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The cause of the mortality was not considered to be linked to any systemic failure on behalf of the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations and has 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 LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) and crew were observed undertaking the loading. All cattle appeared to be in good health and fit for transportation. The cattle were fed and watered within 12 hours of loading. During loading a bull unsuccessfully attempted to jump into a neighbouring pen and caught its leg between the rails. The observer notified the stockperson and loading was halted while the crew successfully freed the bull from the gate without serious injury.

The initial penning of the cattle varied marginally from the proposed load plan. Adjustment to the stocking of pens to comply with the load plan was completed by day 3 of the voyage by the crew and stockperson. Some of the very small pens were incorporated into larger neighbouring pens to enable the cattle to have access to more than one water source. Following adjustment the observer evaluated the stocking rate through comparison to the proposed load plan and to *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)) requirements. The

observer noted slight variations to the load plan and ASEL requirements that on the most part favoured the cattle.

Personnel

There was a stockperson on board who was responsible for implementing the exporter's procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage. Due to the short length of the voyage, no Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) was on board.

The master, crew and stockperson were all experienced and demonstrated their competency in performing their roles.

Daily routine

Daily meetings were conducted at 7:00am. Attendees included the master, Chief Officer (CO), bosun, stockperson, observer and crew. The meetings often consisted of a report from the stockperson on the welfare of the animals and instructions about the feeding regime for the next 24 hours.

The stockperson and crew were diligent in protecting the welfare of the cattle with the objective that the cattle would leave the ship with a weight gain. The stockperson checked the stock at minimum 3 times a day. Additionally they administered treatments, delivered the midday stockperson's report, oversaw dead animal disposal and readjusted pen numbers.

After breakfast the crew cleaned the decks, flushed out the nose bowls and provided a top up feed at 10:30am in accordance with the stockpersons requirements. Other crew tasks were completed as necessary and the cattle were fed again at 3:30pm.

A crew member took temperature readings once a day at 11:00am which were included the stockperson's daily midday report.

The night watch was delivered by 2 members of the crew who checked nose bowls and cleaned feed troughs as required through two 6-hour shifts between 6:00pm and 6:00am.

Feed and water

The cattle were fed pellets and hay. Pellets were fed daily at 6:00am and at 3:30pm. A third feeding occurred at 10:30am and varied on the level of consumption or if hay was to be fed. The stockperson used hay to stimulate the appetite of some of the cattle that were not eating as much as expected. The feed troughs were also cleaned as required and fresh feed added. Daily adjustments were made until all stock had access to ad-lib feed.

Water was delivered to the cattle through fixed metal automatic nose troughs at cattle height. The pen space was adjusted to give cattle better access to nose bowls. Nose bowls were located at both corners of the pens on the side cattle were fed. The nose troughs were flushed out by the crew several times each day. Daily water consumption varied over the length of the voyage and amongst the different lines of cattle.

Ventilation

All livestock decks are fully enclosed. Ventilation is a combination of passive and active systems. Deck 5 has 9 hatches opening to the main deck allowing fresh air to flow in and floor grates

allow air flow to other decks. Air is also pumped around the deck in large PVC pipes with vents that direct the air over the pens.

Temperature and humidity increased around Day 5 after crossing the equator. The cattle did not appear to be unduly effected by the conditions. Temperatures were reported as an average of each of the 3 holds over all decks. Hold 3 usually has a higher temperature due to heat from the engine room. Maximum temperature was recorded for the voyage was 32°C (dry bulb), 29°C (wet bulb) while humidity was 79%.

Pen conditions

Due to the short duration of the voyage, there was no deck washing. The decks were managed well for the duration of the voyage. Pen conditions were acceptable throughout the voyage with the increasing manure pad being of a friable consistency.

Health and welfare

The observer did not see any unacceptable issues relating to animal health and welfare arrangements during the voyage. The stockperson was most diligent in his approach and treated a total of 3 animals for lameness. These cattle received anti-inflammatory injections. Three cattle identified with a probable haematoma were not treated. All treated cattle had improved sufficiently to be discharged with the other cattle in their pens. One mortality occurred on this voyage and the cause was not determined.

Discharge

Low stress cattle handling techniques were used by the crew and stockperson to move the cattle. The discharge to the gangway was quiet and efficient. Movement of the cattle down the gangway to the truck was managed by local employees. While they had electric jiggers they were observed to use them appropriately and without excess.

Conclusion

The observer noted a high degree of diligence from the stockperson and officers and crew of the *Gloucester Express* that complied with ASEL standards to safeguard the welfare of the cattle being transported.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 1 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 2 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 3 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 5 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 5 Species in pen—no issues identified



Day 6 Species in pen—no issues identified

