

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Gloucester Express*

Cattle exported to Indonesia in June 2019

Report 148, December 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 3,656 cattle was loaded onto the MV *Gloucester Express* at the Port of Darwin on 22 June 2019, and departed on the same day. The cattle were discharged at the Port of Jakarta, Indonesia between 27 and 28 June 2019, making this a 7 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.08% (3 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of these mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by 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 observer reported that the vessel was not strictly loaded in accordance with the load plan. There were some pens that were overstocked and understocked and 24 pens configured as long pens which contravened the load plan and the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* ([ASEL](#)) requirements. Over the course of the voyage, several pens were adjusted and the cattle were observed to be comfortable with room to move and rest. While some animals were initially impacted by tight penning, the observer noted there were no adverse animal health or welfare effects.

The observer commented that cattle condition was varied with a number of poor condition heifers included in the consignment.

Personnel

The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) was experienced and displayed a commitment to animal welfare and used calm handling techniques.

The crew were well disciplined and displayed high levels of expertise to deliver positive animal welfare outcomes.

Daily routine

The stockperson performed rounds of the cattle pens three times each day where animals were raised and observed for soundness and general condition. Any animals requiring treatments were noted, treated and details recorded.

Meetings were held each day at 7:00am and were attended by the master, senior officers, bosun and stockperson to discuss feeding and watering routines, and operational issues relating to the voyage or arrival in Jakarta.

The cattle were fed three times a day with water troughs filled concurrently. It was observed that crew attended to nose bowl and fodder trough servicing continuously.

Two night watch crew each worked a 6 hour shift. The night watch crew were responsible for fodder and water maintenance, care of ill stock, stock observations and tending to emergencies.

Feed and water

Pelleted fodder was loaded in accordance with the ASEL requirements, and water was produced continuously on-board the vessel.

The exporter's instructions included a requirement to provide additional feed and water in the troughs. The observer noted that most of the cattle were unfamiliar with the operation of water bowls and that the water troughs were essential. As each pen had a finite amount of rail space, the provision of water troughs competed with space for fodder troughs. There were several pens, in the centre line of the vessel, which only had one side available for troughs. In those pens, only one water and fodder trough could be deployed. This required extra vigilance by crew to ensure fodder and water was adequate. The observer noted that the efforts of the crew, to maintain an adequate supply of water, ensured that there were no adverse impacts on welfare.

Mesh covered openings in the passageways known as hay chutes allowed vertical movement of fodder, equipment and carcasses between decks. Faeces would fall from deck to deck through these mesh openings and contaminated water and fodder troughs on the decks below. It was noted that within minutes of feeding times that troughs on decks below were untouched due to faecal contamination. The department has raised this matter with the exporter.

Ventilation

Ventilation was observed to be strong and effective with no visible signs of heat stress observed in any of the cattle at any point of the voyage.

Temperature readings were taken each day at around 9:00 am. A supplementary reading was taken around 3:00 pm on Day 2 and found to be consistent with the morning reading. Internal hold temperatures remained at around 30°C. Humidity reached a maximum of 80%.

Pen conditions

Pad conditions ranged from medium to dry condition, with a small number of pens that became wet and heavy but were effectively managed with the addition of bedding and left over fodder. The observer noted that the crew servicing the water troughs and nose bowls emptied the

contents into pens which added to wetting issues. This practice was in contravention of the exporters Approved Export Plan (AEP). The department has requested that the exporter address this issue on future voyages.

No deck wash out was required due to the short duration of the voyage. Bedding was not required to be provided to all pens, but was used for pad management and the hospital pens. The observer noted there were no adverse welfare impacts observed as a result of pad management.

Health and welfare

Cattle with nasal discharge, lameness, or injury were inspected by the stockperson and treated as appropriate. Sixteen cattle required treatment.

There were 3 mortalities during the voyage. On the night of departure one animal died and no post mortem was carried out. Two animals were euthanised two days into the voyage due to injuries attributed to loading. No post mortems were conducted.

The observer did not identify any poor animal health or welfare incidents.

Discharge

Prior to discharge the master briefed the crew and reminded them to utilise high standards of animal handling and to immediately report any instances of mistreatment or inappropriate animal handling techniques.

Discharge was very slow due to the trucks that could only carry 13-14 animals at a time. There were long periods of inactivity during discharge whilst waiting for trucks. The observer noted that feed and water supplies were maintained during discharge and the delays did not impact on the welfare of the cattle. Crew members utilised calm cattle handling techniques such as voice command, body position and the rare use of mechanical aids such as poly pipe.

Conclusion

The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements, with minor exceptions such as the initial pen densities and the contamination of some feed troughs.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Cattle in pen—no issues



Day 4 Cattle in pen—no issues



Day 4 Cattle in pen—no issues



Day 5 Cattle in pen—no issues



Day 5 Cattle in pen—no issues



Day 6 Cattle in pen—no issues

