

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Gloucester Express*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in July 2019

Report 158, December 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 2,419 cattle was loaded onto the MV *Gloucester Express* at the Port of Townsville between 11 and 12 July 2019. The vessel departed on 12 July 2019. The cattle were discharged at the Port of Phu My, Vietnam between 21 and 22 July 2019, making this a 12 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the voyage was 0.33% (8 cattle). 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 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

The observer noted that prior to the loading of the vessel, all the decks and ramps were inspected by the stockperson to ensure they were safe and secure. Ramps were covered in sawdust and the cattle were loaded in accordance with the loading plan. The observer noted that the majority of livestock in pens were able to lie down and rest at any one time. Some fine tuning of the densities was undertaken during the first few days to utilise the empty pens.

No injuries, slips or unnecessary stress was observed during the loading process. The cattle were provided with fodder and water within 12 hours of loading.

Personnel

An experienced LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) on-board the vessel was responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the

livestock throughout the voyage. The stockperson provided appropriate care and management in order to maintain the health and welfare of the livestock.

The master had overall responsibility for the vessel, the livestock and all personnel. During the voyage, the master was observed in the cargo holds.

Daily routine

A meeting was held each day on the bridge at 7:15am with the Chief Officer, stockperson, bosun and crew. The discussions included fodder rations, pad conditions and instructions regarding the welfare of the cattle.

The stockperson inspected the livestock, conditions and pads of all five decks of the vessel in the morning and the afternoon. The stockperson used a torch to inspect the legs of the cattle and observe the pad conditions.

One crew member was assigned to the nightwatch shift between 6:00pm and midnight and another between midnight to 6:00am shift. Their tasks included maintenance of the nose bowl water supply and monitoring the welfare of the livestock.

Feed and water

Pelleted fodder was stored in three silos and is transferred to chutes on each deck. The crew manually filled the feed troughs that hung on the outside rails of each pen. All livestock appeared to have adequate access to feed troughs during the voyage.

The cattle were fed pelleted fodder twice per day with chaff fed from day 2 to encourage the cattle to use the feed troughs.

Fresh water was produced by two reverse osmosis plants and the water was delivered to the pens in nose bowls located in the corner of each pen. The crew rinsed and cleaned each nose bowl every 4 hours during the voyage. The cattle had good access to drinking water during the voyage.

Ventilation

All the decks on the vessel were enclosed. The air supply was delivered via large overhead PVC pipes that directed fresh air into the livestock pens. The ventilation system functioned quietly and consistently at all times.

Temperatures were recorded on each deck at 10:30am using a hand held device. The observer noted areas closest to the engine room were warmer than other areas. Temperatures were 33 °C approaching the equatorial region and the remainder of the voyage with humidity range of 74 – 78%. No symptoms of heat stress were noted by the observer.

Pen conditions

Sawdust was spread in the pens that held the bulls and the hospital pens. During the voyage, the pad conditions remained dry and crusty. Unconsumed or spilt pelleted fodder and chaff was added to the pad. The added fodder appeared to benefit the condition of the pads. No wash out of the decks was undertaken.

Health and welfare

The stockperson inspected the livestock, conditions and pads of all five decks of the vessel every morning and the afternoon. The stockperson and crew used low stress handling techniques when handling the livestock.

The main condition observed in the cattle was lameness. A large number of cattle were identified, treated and monitored during the voyage. Some cattle were moved to the hospital pens early in the voyage. As the number of cattle identified as lame increased, they remained in their pens to recover.

There were 8 mortalities during the voyage. Two mortalities were due to animals unable to rise and were euthanased. The cause of the other 6 mortalities was not definitively established.

Discharge

All ramps and walkways were covered in sawdust prior to discharge commencing. The discharge was undertaken in a timely manner and the health and welfare of the livestock was observed to be maintained during the discharge process. Feed and water were supplied to the livestock waiting to be discharged.

Conclusion

The vessel crew and stockperson were dedicated and diligent in performing their duties to ensure the wellbeing and welfare of the cattle.

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

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 4 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 5 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 6 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 7 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 10 Cattle in pen - no issues identified

