

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Yangtze Harmony*

Cattle exported to China in August 2018

Report 16, May 2019

Voyage summary

The MV Yangtze Harmony is an enclosed 8 deck livestock carrier vessel.

The consignment commenced and completed loading cattle in Fremantle, Western Australia, on 18 August 2018. It departed Fremantle early morning on the 19 August with 2 190 head of slaughter cattle. Discharge took 27 hours and was completed at Huanghua, China, on 3 September 2018, making this a journey of 14 days, with loading and discharge taking 44 hours in total.

The Independent Observer (IO) joined the vessel in Fremantle.

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.13 per cent (three mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate as stated in the [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock \(Version 2.3\) 2011](#) (ASEL). The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure on behalf of the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the IO from loading in Fremantle until discharge in Huanghua, China. The summary has been approved by the IO who accompanied this voyage.

Implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of livestock

Exporter documentation

The exporter load plan was submitted to the department prior to departure as required. The load plan was based on carriage of 2 214 head.

Consignment specific export plans (CSEPs) were available for the cattle addressing procedures relating to provision of fodder, water, bedding (cattle only) medication, humane destruction, and livestock officer instructions from loading through to discharge and contingencies. The instructions included in the CSEPs were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.

Loading

Loading was an efficient process, and was completed on 18 August 2018. Livestock were in general loaded onto the vessel in accordance with the load plan, noting some adjustments were made in the first few days to ensure livestock pen densities were in accordance with ASEL. The health and welfare of livestock was maintained during the loading process. For this voyage, the

vessel was significantly understocked. At all times, all livestock within a pen were able to lie down simultaneously.

Personnel

The LiveCorp accredited stockperson (stockperson) on board was responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage, until completion of discharge. No Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) was on board this voyage.

The vessel had a total of 34 personnel, including 18 livestock crew. The Master and Chief Officer (CO) were rarely observed on the livestock decks. This hindered their ability to actively participate in discussions concerning the management and welfare of the cattle, including at the regular daily meetings. They were generally receptive to advice from the stockperson in the presence of the IO. Two crew were rostered as overnight to monitor the animals, ventilation and water.

The livestock crew were generally hard working. They worked calmly around the cattle and were open to receiving guidance. They benefited from the direction of the stockperson who ensured they completed tasks appropriately.

Daily routine

Meetings were held each morning on the bridge with the CO, Bosun, stockperson and IO. The Master was also sometimes present. Plans were reviewed and any issues relating to feeding, pen transfers, hospital pens and deck washing were discussed. Temperature and humidity readings were recorded at 8:30am each day by the CO and entered into the daily report.

Feed and water

The IO noted a regular problem with water troughs being easily dislodged by cattle rising to stand. This would lead to short periods without water. More significant was the free flowing water wetting the pads of several pens as a result. Most floods could be dealt with by sawdust but there were some pens which proved difficult to dry out effectively through the rest of the voyage. On several occasions, major leaks occurred overnight due to trough dislodgement which caused localised flooding. The night crew were not always able to prevent flooding from this source. On each occasion this was managed by temporarily moving cattle to alternative pens and using sawdust to absorb residual moisture.

Pelletised fodder was held in large silos at the bow of the vessel. It was high quality and there was sufficient quantity to feed cattle continuously for the entirety of the voyage. Good quality water was provided from an on-board desalination plant and was continuously available. Food and water access and consumption met ASEL requirements.

Pellets were distributed from silos by a computerised system to holding tanks accessible via chutes at multiple points on each deck. Crew distributed fodder from the chutes to feed troughs by hand using buckets. Mobile plastic feed troughs hung on the outside of the pen rails but they were prone to being knocked off the pen rail by animal movement. Most pens had space for 2-3 feed troughs in addition to the mobile automatic water trough.

Good quality hay was used to increase consumption of shy feeders. Although the amount loaded was limited, the IO noted that it was sufficient to add to bull rations and shy feeders on a daily basis.

Ventilation

All decks were lit 24 hours a day, and the ventilation and extraction system was deemed good throughout the vessel.

Maximum temperatures recorded on the voyages were between 31-32 degrees Celsius with 83-85 per cent humidity. Some panting of cattle was observed, especially of cattle lying down, however when they stood the panting ceased and they did not appear distressed.

Pen conditions

The pens were overall kept in good condition. Some became wet and sloppy for a variety of reasons, including water leaks. Additional sawdust was added when pens became sloppy. It was generally the enclosed aft pens that were wet, but it varied throughout the voyage. However, the pad conditions were never problematic or observed to create any welfare concerns for the animals. Pens and decks were washed once during the voyage before arrival into China.

The IO noted that occasionally a pen was found overstocked when compared to ASEL, however this was rectified quickly by the stockperson and did not impact welfare.

Health and welfare

All decks had identified and marked hospital pens and some animals were treated for lameness and respiratory issues. There was no cattle crush on the vessel and the IO deemed the ramps to be satisfactory.

Veterinary drug use was in line with the ailments being treated and the vessel was more than sufficiently supplied with medications.

Discharge

All elements of discharge were deemed to be compliant with ASEL and maintained the health and welfare of the animals.

Conclusion

The IO determined that the relevant procedures relating to the management of livestock exported by sea were consistent with ASEL.

The IO observed a high level of compliance with the export plan and good animal welfare outcomes for the cattle being transported. The number of reported mortalities was accurate, as were other elements detailed in daily reports.

It is also significant that the vessel was not operating near maximum animal stocking capacity, which provided leeway in relation to the ability to distribute animals across all pens. The sea conditions were excellent through the voyage and the weather was as predicted for that time of year.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 2 Alleyway—no issues identified



Day 8 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 8 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 13 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 13 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

