

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ganado Express*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in July 2019

Report 161, December 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 2,377 cattle was loaded onto the *MV Ganado Express* at Townsville on 22 July 2019 and departed the same day. The vessel discharged the cattle at the Port of Hai Phong, Vietnam, between 4 and 5 August 2019, making this a 15-day voyage. The voyage duration was unexpectedly extended by a mechanical problem with the vessel's main engine, and the vessel encountering severe weather during the voyage.

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

The mortality rate for cattle was 0.34% (8 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments are a summary of key observations that have been approved by the observer who accompanied the 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 load plan was largely compliant with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* (ASEL) requirements, although the observer noted a number of long pens were created and some pens were stocked at densities higher than the ASEL requirements.

One animal was injured during loading when its leg became caught in the top rail of a pen divider. The animal was humanely euthanased.

All cattle were fed and watered within 12 hours of boarding the vessel.

Personnel

An experienced LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanied the voyage and was responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage.

The bosun and livestock crew were all experienced in the transport of livestock, and were able to identify relevant health and welfare issues.

Daily routine

The livestock crew started work at 7:00am with a staff briefing before commencing duties. Before the first feed, they cleaned any feed troughs soiled overnight, then fed the cattle three times per day. Nose bowls were cleaned and filled following feeding and a separate crew cleaned spilt fodder from the deck alleyways. Spilt fodder was shovelled back into cattle pens to assist with pad management and moisture content. The bosun did his observation rounds while the livestock crew were distributing feed.

A cattle management meeting was held each day at 10:30am and was attended by the Chief Officer (CO), stockperson, and observer. These meetings discussed general livestock and vessel issues, feeding requirements and any problem areas or work to be completed.

The stockperson commenced rounds at 8:00am, when they checked all cattle, paying particular attention to their general demeanour, shy feeders, pen density, foot health, and pad condition. Cattle that required treatment were identified. The stockperson also observed water availability and the cattle's feed consumption. The care and management of the stock and animal husbandry activities undertaken by the stockperson were consistent with ASEL requirements.

A single night watch crewmember was rostered at four-hour intervals to monitor the cattle, and check water bowls.

Feed and water

Pelletised feed was distributed to each deck by drop chutes from the three storage silos, then bagged by the livestock crew for delivery to feed troughs. The feed was high quality with no mould, and minimal dust and fines. Coarse chopped hay and chaff were also of a high standard with little to no dust or other contamination.

The cattle fed and drank well after an initial settling-in period. Feed consumption dropped on day 10 due to typhoon weather. Feed was reduced to 40–50% of normal quantity for the final two days of the voyage because the expected duration of the voyage had increased. This increase in voyage duration was attributed to vessel stoppage for part of day 6 for repairs to the main engine, and reduction in vessel speed from day 10 due to the typhoon weather.

Ventilation

The vessel's ventilation system was effective at all times. The cattle did not show any signs of heat stress during the voyage.

The livestock crew took temperature readings on deck once daily. The maximum dry bulb temperature range was 25–31 °C, and relative humidity was 79–93% across all decks.

Pen conditions

The majority of cattle were penned in accordance with the load plan and ASEL requirements although the observer noted there were several pens loaded in excess of requirements. A number of bulls were penned with other bulls that were more than 50 kg lighter. Two horned steers were penned with horned bulls. The stockperson worked hard in the difficult and

potentially unsafe conditions on the vessel to rectify these issues and took all available steps to prevent any animal health or welfare outcomes. No obvious adverse animal welfare outcomes were observed.

Pad conditions remained good throughout most of the voyage. The stockperson managed problems well, and added sawdust to wet pens and to pens with heavier bulls.

Pad conditions deteriorated towards the end of the voyage in some pens. One deck was washed out as a pre-emptive measure to prevent excessive deterioration due to the extended voyage. The pad conditions did not appear to have a significant impact on the welfare of the cattle.

Health and welfare

Animal health and welfare were well maintained throughout the voyage. The stockperson was meticulous in their observation and management of the cattle.

There were eight mortalities on the voyage. Six were found dead in their pens with two autopsies attributing the cause to lung disease. One animal was euthanased because of a leg injury during loading, and another was euthanased before discharge as it was unable to rise.

Treatments and euthanasia were performed in a competent and timely manner. There were no issues with the overall health and welfare of the cattle.

Discharge

Discharge was performed in a competent and professional manner. The cattle did not appear to have been adversely affected by the extended voyage.

No animal health or welfare issues were observed as a result of the discharge of the consignment.

Conclusion

The observer noted that the stockperson and the crew ensured that the health and welfare of the cattle were maintained during a voyage that encountered delays due to engine breakdown and typhoon weather.

The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage, and to be compliant with the ASEL requirements.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 4 Cattle penned in excess of ASEL weight variation limits



Day 5 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 8 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 10 cattle in pen – no issue identified



Day 13 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

