

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Bison Express*

Cattle exported to Indonesia in August 2019

Report 175, December 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 2,863 cattle were loaded on the *MV Bison Express* at the Port of Darwin between 24 and 25 August 2019. The vessel departed on 25 August 2019. The vessel discharged the cattle at the Port of Jakarta, Indonesia between 29 and 30 August 2019, making this a 7 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.03% (1 mortality), which does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The cause of the mortality was 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 and contingencies.

Loading

Due to the relatively small number of cattle loaded and the experience of the livestock crew, very little adjustment was required to ensure that the individual pen stocking density complied with the load plan and the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* ([ASEL](#)) requirements. The cattle were observed to have sufficient space to access feed and water. No animal welfare issues were observed during loading.

Personnel

There as a LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) on board responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage. The stockperson was experienced on both long and short haul voyages.

The master, officers, and livestock crew were at all times helpful and willing to provide assistance to the observer. The livestock crew worked well throughout the voyage to maintain animal health and welfare in accordance with the ASEL requirements.

Daily routine

A management meeting was held each day at 6:30am and was attended by the officer on watch, bosun, livestock crew, stockperson, and observer. Matters discussed included feeding and watering requirements for the day, treatments to sick or injured animals, estimated time of arrival to port. Discharge plans were discussed when the vessel was close to Jakarta.

Morning feeding, manual watering, then afternoon feeding occurred during each day. The nightwatch crew were rostered between 6:00pm–6:00am to monitor the welfare of the cattle.

Feed and water

Pelletised feed was stored in four silos which flowed down chutes to the penning areas where it was manually bagged, then emptied into plastic feed troughs located at the front of each livestock pen. Any old or dusty feed remaining in the troughs was first tipped out to ensure that the cattle were being fed clean feed free of dust on every occasion. The exporter loaded a weight of feed that complied with the ASEL requirements.

Water was delivered to cattle by nose bowls located in the front corners of each pen. Supplementary water troughs were placed alongside feed troughs, and the livestock crew manually filled them by hose. The cattle consumed adequate feed and water during the voyage.

Ventilation

The vessel's ventilation system was observed to be effective throughout the voyage. Air to the livestock penning areas was provided by long ducts running lengthways above the pens with air blown downwards. Large exhaust fans were located strategically on each deck which worked well at maintaining even temperatures throughout the decks. It was also an efficient means of drying pens to provide a firm pad.

Temperatures during the voyage ranged from 27–29 °C dry bulb, 24–26 °C wet bulb, with an overall humidity of 79%.

Pen conditions

Due to the effective ventilation system, the pen areas dried to provide a soft, relatively dry pad. Very few wet spots were noticed, and they dried quickly. Old or wet feed was regularly cleaned from the walkways. At least 50% of cattle could lie down at any one time. There was no need for a deck wash down due to the length of the voyage.

Health and welfare

The stockperson used low stress techniques during loading and discharge. In the first 36 hours of the voyage some cattle were a little flighty in their new environment and extra care was taken by the crew when in their vicinity. Hospital pens were located on each deck and were easily identified. Veterinary supplies were adequate to treat the few lame cattle in the hospital pens.

One mortality was recorded on the voyage where an animal was found dead in its pen on day 3. The stockperson attributed its death to pneumonia at the autopsy. Throughout the voyage there were no issues observed with the overall health and welfare of the cattle.

The short duration of the voyage, the good configuration of the cattle decks, the management of the feeding and watering of the livestock, the professional and competent conduct of the stockperson and livestock crew and good communication throughout the vessel all contributed to the maintenance of animal welfare standards throughout the voyage.

Discharge

At discharge the cattle were observed to be strong and in good condition, showing no signs of lameness or ill health, including those discharged from the hospital pens. It was observed that some bigger, better-conditioned cattle had gained weight throughout the voyage.

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

Conclusion

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

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 4 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 5 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 6 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

