

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Bison Express*

Cattle exported to Indonesia in September 2019

Report 181, December 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 2,693 cattle was loaded on the *MV Bison Express* at Darwin on 7 September 2019 and departed in the afternoon on the same day. The vessel discharged the cattle at the Port of Tanjung Priok, Jakarta, between 12 and 13 September 2019, making this a 7-day voyage.

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

There were no cattle mortalities on this voyage.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations and has 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 and contingencies.

Loading

The cattle were loaded in accordance with the initial load plan which met the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* ([ASEL](#)) requirements. The observer noted that the cattle quickly settled in and were in good health.

No animal welfare issues were noted during loading.

Personnel

The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) who accompanied the voyage worked well to ensure the health and welfare of the cattle.

The livestock crew were responsible for the care, management and welfare of the cattle. Two night watch crew shared the night watch arrangements between 6:00pm and 6:00am on six-hourly rosters. Their duties comprised inspecting the pens; and checking the cattle, food and water supply.

Daily routine

Daily meetings were held at 7:00am with the livestock crew, and at 10:00am between the stockperson, master, Chief Officer (CO), bosun, and Engineer to discuss and update livestock-related matters.

Cattle were fed and watered three times each day with feed and water top-ups at 6:00pm as required. Water was checked, and manual nose water troughs cleaned and topped up during the feeding schedule.

Temperature and humidity readings were taken at 10:00am each day.

Feed and water

Adequate feed (165 tonnes of pellets and 7.5 tonnes of chaff) and water were available for the duration of the voyage. Water production was 90 tonnes per day.

The observer noted that some nose bowls had low water pressure and fill rate, so that manual watering into one feed trough per pen was undertaken from the first day. The low water pressure notified by the observer were acted on immediately by the stockperson and the vessel's crew. The low water pressure did not become a welfare or non-compliance issue during the voyage because the water troughs were cleaned and replenished during each feeding time.

Ventilation

Ventilation on the vessel was very good, and helped to maintain pad dryness by providing constant airflow. Temperature and humidity readings were taken each day at 10:00am and recorded average temperatures of 29–30 °C with 79% humidity. There were no relatively hotter or more humid areas noted on any pen decks. No cattle were observed with symptoms of heat stress, and the cattle appeared to be comfortable for the duration of the voyage.

Pen conditions

Conditions in most pens remained good during the voyage; however, six pen pads were affected by water leaks caused by aged and corroded water pipes and fittings that led to wetter areas.

Wet pads and walkways were constantly managed by covering with sawdust and old feed. The leaks identified as directly affecting pads were repaired within 12–24 hours.

A second issue related to corrosion to some pen gate hinges, which meant that some pins did not completely secure the pen gates, making it difficult for livestock crew to open and close gates securely to ensure a safe and efficient load and offload of cattle. The observer noted that if the plumbing corrosion and low water pressure issues were not properly remediated, they could become a greater problem on longer voyages at hotter times of the year.

Health and welfare

There were no animal health and welfare issues during the voyage, no mortalities, and few shy feeders. Only four veterinary treatments were required comprising three for lameness, and one for respiratory illness. All treated cattle responded well to treatment.

Discharge

Trucks were continuously available and all the cattle discharged well, with minimal need for electric prodders. The stockperson, livestock crew and Indonesian stockhandlers all worked well together to enable an efficient discharge.

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

Conclusion

The observer noted that the stockpersons and the crew ensured that the health and welfare of the cattle were maintained during the voyage.

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 Water leaks



Day 2 Alleyway – no issues identified



Day 3 Hospital pen – no issues identified



Day 4 Not secured pen gate



Day 4 Misaligned gate pin



Day 6 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

