

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Girolando Express*

Cattle exported to China in September 2019

Report 185, January 2020

Voyage summary

A consignment of 1,742 cattle was loaded onto the *MV Girolando Express* at the Port of Geraldton on 12 September 2019 and departed on the same day. The cattle were discharged at the Port of Weifang, China, between on 1 October 2019, making this a 20-day voyage.

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

There were no mortalities during the voyage.

The following comments are a summary of key observations and 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 cattle were not strictly loaded in accordance with the load plan with several pens observed to be overstocked. The numbers of cattle in these pens were progressively adjusted during the voyage.

No animal welfare issues were observed during loading.

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 vessel's officers and livestock crew were effective in carrying out their duties.

Daily routine

A management meeting was held each day at 10:00am with the master (on some occasions), the Chief Officer (CO), stockperson and the bosun (attended most of the meetings) to discuss the running of the livestock decks.

Nightwatch crew were assigned duties in two shifts from 6:00pm to midnight, then midnight to 6:00am. They were responsible for the maintenance of water supply in the nose bowls and for the rectification of water leakages.

Six days after the commencement of the voyage the vessel developed mechanical issues. On day 11 the vessel anchored for repairs over a twenty-four hour period just north of the equator. The observer noted there was no evident impact on the health and welfare of the cattle.

Feed and water

Pelletised feed was stored in three silos on the vessel then gravity-fed from the silos to outlets disturbed along each deck. The livestock crew then manually filled the bags from the outlets and distribute the pellets to troughs.

The livestock crew fed the livestock pelletised feed twice daily and chaff once a day with a top-up feed provided on request by the stockperson. The amount of pelletised feed loaded was in excess of *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* (ASEL) requirements for this voyage.

The vessel produced water through reverse osmosis and water was supplied to pens via automatic nose bowls. There were one or two nose bowls per pen.

The cattle were observed to be able to consume adequate feed and water during the voyage.

Ventilation

The ventilation system operated efficiently and consistently and there was no significant variation in the temperature measurements. Air was directed through ducts to all areas of the livestock decks and hot/stale air was extracted via 6 exhaust turrets.

Temperature and humidity were measured by sling psychrometer each morning at around 9:30am. The observer noted the efficiency of the ventilation system contributed to an even separation between the dry and wet bulb readings on all cattle decks throughout the voyage.

Pen conditions

The observer noted the redistribution of cattle to rectify pens overstocked at loading was carried out relatively slowly, consequently, penning anomalies remained well into the voyage – one pen contained two head of cattle, while other pens of comparable size contained seven or eight head.

A significant number of cattle had horns that were blunt, but were longer than the 12 cm as required under ASEL. In other cases, horns were shorter than 12 cm, but not blunt or tipped. Some cattle with untipped horns displayed aggressive attitude to their pen companions, with the potential for trauma to occur although no instances were observed.

Some holds on Decks 4 and 5 were washed during the vessel's slow passage ahead of it anchoring for repairs. Washing of the remaining holds on Decks 4 and 5, and Decks 1 to 3 were agreed during discussions between the CO and stockperson.

Health and welfare

Approximately 15 cattle were treated in hospital pens for leg swelling or lameness during the voyage, all with complete resolution. There were no mortalities.

The observer noted there was a period during the voyage where, in particular, the heavier cattle in pens near the engine room and in the hospital pens, evidenced increased respiratory rates. This was accompanied with mild signs of increased heat load such as serous nasal discharge, a soft wet cough, and restless or irritable behaviours. Despite this, the observer noted the overall health and welfare of these cattle was maintained during the voyage.

Discharge

On arrival at the port of discharge, the vessel was required to anchor and to await the offload of another livestock consignment.

All livestock had access to clean water and fodder and no animal health or welfare issues were observed as a result of the delay or during the discharge.

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 with the exception that the horns of some cattle were either too long or short and un-tipped.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 4 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 12 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Untipped horns



Day 13 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 15 Drying pad—no issues identified



Day 17 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

