

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Ute*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in October 2019

Report 196, February 2020

Voyage summary

A consignment of 3,594 cattle was loaded onto the *MV Ocean Ute* at the Port of Townsville between 19 and 20 October 2019. The vessel departed on 20 October 2019. The cattle were discharged at the Port of Hon La, Vietnam, between 2 and 3 November 2019, making this a 16 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.08% (3 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of these mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

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 loaded strictly in accordance with the load plan or with *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* (ASEL) density requirements.

The observer noted this was due to the cattle on the first two decks weighing on average 100kg more than had been estimated. The stockperson recognised this early in the loading process and was able to modify the load plan to allow the pen densities to be adjusted. This was corrected over the first three days of the voyage in order to meet the ASEL requirements. There were no signs of stress or adverse animal welfare outcomes observed as a result of the pen density issues.

Personnel

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

The stockperson was observed to be experienced in animal handling and employed low-stress handling techniques and managed the cattle effectively during the voyage to achieve a high standard of welfare.

The Chief Officer (CO), bosun and stockperson worked collaboratively when carrying out daily activities.

Daily routine

The stockperson carried out morning inspections of the cattle from around 7:00am every morning. During the rounds each animal was inspected to ensure they were able to stand.

A cattle management meeting was held at 10:00am each day and was attended by the CO, bosun and stockperson. Topics discussed included treatments, condition of cattle and feeding regime. The afternoon cattle inspections began at 4:00pm. Treatments were performed as needed following the morning and afternoon inspections.

The cattle, water systems, ventilation, fodder delivery, silos, pad condition and equipment were inspected each morning by the CO.

Night watch duties were performed in three shifts with one crew member assigned to each shift. Duties included maintaining feed and water troughs and stock checks. If sick or injured cattle were identified the stockperson was notified.

Feed and water

Pelletised feed was delivered to the decks through a mechanical feed delivery system channelled to multiple piles throughout each deck. The crew then manually filled the troughs. The observer noted there was fodder wastage due to feeding system and the forming of feed piles.

The cattle were fed pelleted feed twice daily and chaff was fed to the feeder bulls in the morning from day 6 of the voyage onwards. From day 9 an additional feed was given from 10:30am.

At the beginning of the voyage, the stockperson reduced the feed distributed to the cattle to allow them to adjust to the feed and to conserve fodder as they considered there was a high likelihood of the voyage taking longer than planned.

In addition, although the fodder loaded was based on a 13 day voyage, the actual voyage extended into day 16. This meant the action by the stockman to conserve fodder at the commencement of the voyage helped to ensure there was no risk of running low on feed. However this meant that the exporters feeding instructions were not followed for the first 7sevens days of the voyage. The observer noted there were no adverse welfare outcomes for the cattle in relation to feeding.

The pens had an average of 2 nose bowls and 3 feed troughs in each pen. All animals were observed to have sufficient access to feed and water. Water was checked at feeding times and intermittently throughout the day.

Ventilation

The ventilation system worked normally throughout the voyage. On day 10 a 3 meter section of the air delivery pipes on Deck 4 were damaged. At least three quarters of the delivery system and 100% of the extraction system remained functional so the airflow through the deck remained close to optimal while repairs were made. No stress indicators in cattle or changes to pad condition were observed during the time it took to repair the system.

Wet and dry bulb temperatures were taken on each deck between 7:00am and 7:30am each morning.

Pen conditions

Adjustments were made early in the voyage to pen densities and were in accordance or in excess of the ASEL requirements. The observer noted that 50% or more of the animals were able to lie down and rest at any one time. Pen conditions were managed by application of sawdust and movement of pens and were considered to be acceptable throughout the voyage.

Health and welfare

The cattle were routinely inspected by the stockperson and the crew. Any animals identified as having an injury or illness were transferred to hospital pens and given appropriate treatment and were provided with ad lib feed and water. The three main conditions treated during the voyage were Bovine Respiratory Disease (BRD), injury and lameness. There were also 4 pink-eye cases, one diarrhoea and one downer animal.

There were three mortalities on this voyage. These mortalities were attributed to pleurisy, septicaemia and the euthanasia of a downer cow.

It is worth noting that while feed was loaded in excess of ASEL requirements for a 13 day voyage the increased voyage length of 16 days and the vessel feeding system meant the fodder had to be closely managed to prevent shortages. The observer noted that the fodder management methods of the stockperson were effective and no adverse outcome were observed as a result of feeding.

Discharge

The observer did not note any issues during discharge. The cattle received feed and water throughout the discharge process.

Conclusion

The observer did not note any issues regarding animal health or welfare. The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage with the exception of the feed instructions.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 1 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 5 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 9 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 13 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 15 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 16 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

