

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Bahijah*

Cattle exported to Israel in November 2019

Report 202, January 2020

Voyage summary

A consignment of 6,538 cattle was loaded onto the MV *Bahijah* at the Port of Fremantle between 17 and 18 November 2019. The vessel departed on 18 November 2019. The cattle were discharged at the Port of Eilat, Israel, between 6 and 7 December 2019, making this a 21-day voyage.

An Independent Observer (observer) boarded the vessel at Fremantle and remained on board until completion of discharge at the final port.

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.03% (2 mortalities) which 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 from the observer 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 including contingencies.

Loading

The cattle were loaded according to the load plan, which was compliant with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* (ASEL) requirements.

The Independent Observer reported that one light feeder bull was injured during loading. This bull was transferred to a hospital pen and was discharged without incident. Despite this event, the observer reported that loading of livestock occurred smoothly with no negative welfare issues observed.

Personnel

An Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and a LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanied the voyage, and were responsible for implementing the exporter's procedures to ensure the health and the welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage. The AAV and head stockperson were both experienced in livestock export voyages.

The vessel's officers were engaged in daily stock management. The livestock crew, supervised by the bosun, demonstrated competent animal handling to ensure animal welfare outcomes were achieved.

Daily routine

Management meetings were held daily at 10:00am and were attended by the master, Chief Officer, AAV, stockpersons and the observer. Topics discussed included vessel specific issues, crew performance, daily scheduling, daily mortalities, issues relating to health and welfare of livestock including feed and water consumption, treatments, pad management and adverse weather conditions.

Feeding was automated on all decks. Automated feeding commenced at 6:00am. A second feed began at 3:00pm. Feeding of chaff and top ups of pellets to troughs occurred at 10:00am, with additional feed provided as directed by the stockperson or AAV. The livestock crew rotated work between 6:00am and 5:00pm.

The nightwatch duties comprised of one-hour shifts between 6:00pm and 5:00am, with the AAV or stockperson notified of any issues as required.

Feed and water

The fodder loaded on the vessel was in accordance with the ASEL requirements.

Pellet fodder was generally of good quality, however as silo levels receded, a build-up of feed dust ('fines') was observed. The observer described that troughs affected by pellet fines were emptied before the morning feeding commenced, or on an as-needed basis as instructed by the AAV or stockperson. The presence of pellet fines on this voyage had no observable impact on animal welfare and was managed effectively.

The vessel was fitted with four reverse osmosis units to generate water which automatically replenished water troughs through a cock and ball system. The livestock crew maintained the water troughs in a clean condition throughout the voyage.

Shy-feeders were identified daily by the AAV or stockperson and were moved to hospital pens where they had access to feed and water.

Ventilation

The vessel had a total of seven decks, four fully enclosed and three open decks, with a combination of ventilation supply fans and exhaust fans. Three ventilation fans failed at different intervals during the voyage. The observer reported that these fans were repaired or replaced in a timely manner with no negative health or welfare implications for the cattle while these fans were inoperable.

The highest recorded dry bulb temperature reached 33°C. The maximum recorded humidity was 95%. On days 10 to 12 when the vessel reached the equator, the observer noted that cattle were heat affected during several nights, with respiration rates reaching 80-100 breaths per minute, however, no cattle exhibited open-mouth panting. Despite these elevated temperatures, the observer reported that there was no indication that the cattle were experiencing heat stress.

Pen conditions

Pen conditions were monitored throughout the voyage and managed acceptably. The observer noted that additional bedding was loaded in excess of the ASEL requirements, as required by exporter's Approved Export Program for this consignment.

Deck washing was performed on days 8, 9, 12, 13, 16 and 17. Pen conditions remained firm throughout the voyage, reaching a maximum depth of 10cm in most pens. The observer noted there was sufficient space for greater than 50% of cattle to lie down during the voyage, with adequate access to feed and water at all times.

On two occasions during the voyage, inundation with sea water due to poor weather conditions resulted in flooding of several pens on Deck 5. Affected cattle were re-located to empty pens on Deck 7, where they remained until the pens on Deck 5 were dried out and refreshed with new bedding.

Health and welfare

Cattle were closely monitored during the voyage. Animals exhibiting signs of lameness, lacerations, illness or shy-feeding were quickly identified and moved to hospital pens to receive appropriate treatment. All treated animals were observed walking at discharge and were witnessed to be of good condition.

There were a total of two mortalities on this voyage. The cause of death for the first mortality was not identified. The second mortality was the euthanasia of a bull by the AAV due to lameness caused by misadventure during discharge. Approximately 47 treatments were administered during the voyage for lameness, poor doers and leg cuts.

Despite the mortalities, the overall health and welfare of the cattle was well maintained during the voyage.

Discharge

The cattle were provided with uninterrupted feed and water during discharge and were unloaded smoothly. One animal was euthanased at the time of discharge due to lameness. Overall, the discharge was completed smoothly.

Conclusion

The observer stated that the vessel's crew were aware of animal welfare procedures and demonstrated acceptable animal handling skills.

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 13 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 6 Cattle in pen—pad condition prior to wash-down



Day 3 Flooding—prior to cattle re-location



Day 3 Pad drying out after flooding



Day 7 Cattle in hospital pen—no issues identified



Day 2 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

