

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Girolando Express*

Cattle exported to China in Dec 2019

Report 205, February 2020

Voyage summary

A consignment of 1,943 cattle was loaded onto the MV *Girolando Express* at Fremantle between 1 and 2 December. The vessel departed on 2 December 2019. Discharge occurred between 15 and 16 December at Weifang Port, China, making this a 16 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate was 0.26% (five mortalities), which did 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 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 observer reported that cattle were loaded in accordance with [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 \(version 2.3\)](#) (ASEL). It was noted by the observer that loading of heavy cattle was in accordance with the exporter's Heavy Cattle Management Plan (HCMP), which was compliant with ASEL. Animals were observed to be loaded calmly, with no negative health or welfare incidents.

Personnel

A LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanied the voyage, and was responsible for implementing the exporter's procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage. The stockperson was experienced and demonstrated low-stress animal handling techniques.

The vessel's officers monitored stock and reported directly to the master. The livestock crew were observed to immediately respond to any issues to ensure adequate animal welfare during the voyage.

Daily routine

A management meeting was held daily at 10:00am with the Chief Officer (CO), stockperson, bosun and the observer in attendance.

Fodder was manually distributed into troughs three times daily.

The nightwatch comprised of two shifts between 7:00pm and 12:00am and 12:00am to 5:00pm.

Feed and water

Pelletised feed and chaff was observed to be loaded in accordance with ASEL requirements.

Fodder was distributed manually by crew into troughs. Occasionally, feed troughs were dislodged by cattle from pen rails. The observer reported that this was corrected by all crew on each deck to ensure adequate feed to animals throughout the voyage. Shy-feeders were identified by the stockperson and were transferred to hospital pens as required.

Days 11 and 12 of the voyage experienced rough sea conditions, with an observed reduction in pellet consumption by the cattle. The observer reported that these conditions appeared to have no obvious physical effect on the cattle and the reduction in feed intake was mitigated to some degree by providing additional chaff.

The vessel was fitted with reverse osmosis units, with water replenished to troughs via automatic valves in nose bowls. Crew were noted by the observer to regularly clean and replenish water troughs that had become contaminated with feed or manure.

All animals had sufficient space to access feed, with water available *ad libitum* for the duration of the voyage.

Ventilation

The vessel had five enclosed decks with a combination of ventilation supply and exhaust fans functioning without interruption throughout the voyage. The observer reported that all pens received good air flow.

The average deck wet bulb temperatures ranged from 25-29°C. As the vessel crossed the equatorial region, the highest recorded wet bulb temperature was recorded in the rear hold of Deck 4 (above the main engine) at 30°C. On day 7, the observer identified six heavy bulls as being the most heat affected, demonstrating a heat stress score 1.

The observer reported that hatches were closed during the final three days of the voyage to prevent cold air from entering the cattle pens when deck wet bulb temperatures reduced to an average of 8°C by day 14.

Pen conditions

Pen conditions were monitored throughout the voyage and were reported by the observer as being managed acceptably.

Deck washing was performed on days 10 and 11 of the voyage, with the observer reporting a consequential 2°C drop in deck temperatures. Over the days following deck wash-down, some pads became sloppier. Sawdust was applied to rectify this and no negative health or welfare effects were observed upon the cattle within affected pens.

Health and welfare

A total of five mortalities occurred on this voyage (0.26%). Three hospitalised animals died from pneumonia, one steer died from head/neck trauma. A definitive cause of death was not known for the fifth animal that died as no post-mortem was performed due to the vessel being docked at the port of discharge.

Approximately 19 animals required treatment on this voyage for various reasons, including lameness, wounds, pneumonia, ill-thrift, bloat and shy-feeders.

Discharge

Discharge was performed at the port of Weifang, China from 15 to 16 December 2019. The cattle were provided with feed and water during discharge. While most cattle were discharged uneventfully, the observer reported that one steer was found deceased in its pen from an unknown cause.

Conclusion

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

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Cattle in pen—no issues identified.



Day 5 Cattle in pen—no issues identified.



Day 8 Cattle in pen—no issues identified.



Day 10 Cattle in pen following deck wash-down—no issues identified.



Day 12 Cattle in pen—no issues identified.



Day 14 Cattle in pen—no issues identified.

