

VALE COMMENTS on Report 17 Gloucester Express China August 2018

Departed Geelong: 24 August 2018 carrying 3 579 cattle.

Discharge at Dongying, China complete on 12 September 2018

Voyage 20 days

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.03 per cent (one mortality).

This was a low mortality voyage with no adverse weather or ship conditions reported. Two breaches of ASEL were noted on this voyage, one being inadequate food – a major non-compliance - and the other leading to the only mortality on the voyage.

Personnel

IO SUMMARY: There was a very experienced LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) on-board with 25 years of experience

VALE COMMENT: a stockperson is not a veterinarian. This was a 20 day voyage. Veterinarians used to be required by the Department on all long-haul voyages (over 10 days). This requirement has been removed and these voyages to China are now exempt from requiring a veterinarian, despite the fact that they can be as long as voyages to the Middle East and that significant high mortality incidents occurred earlier in 2018 on voyages from southern Australia to China.

Feed and water

IO SUMMARY: The volume of pellets and chaff loaded at Geelong was sufficient to cover the feeding of cattle for the estimated 15 days journey to China, with an additional three-day contingency as required under ASEL.

VALE COMMENT: this voyage took 20 days; not enough food was loaded.

Health and welfare

IO SUMMARY: The voyage had a very low mortality rate, with one pregnant heifer needing to be euthanised while trying to give birth to a dead, full-term calf. This constituted a breach of the ASEL Standard 1.10 for selection of pregnant females that should be certified as no more than 190 days pregnant at the time of departure.

VALE COMMENT: IO noted the breach of ASEL. There have been births on most of the voyages for which there are IO reports. Exporters should be penalised for breach of ASEL. In addition, cattle pregnancy testing should be performed by *PREgCHECK*[™] (National Cattle Pregnancy Diagnosis scheme) accredited veterinarians. Currently, lay operators are authorised to perform this testing which is inappropriate. Regardless, VALE does not consider it adequate that a very late pregnant heifer was not detected at the time of feedlotting and loading – this should have been evident to experienced stock personnel.

Discharge

IO SUMMARY: The IO noted some inexperienced Chinese handlers on the wharf occasionally prodding cattle unnecessarily during the process of loading cattle from the vessel's raceway onto waiting trucks. Overall, all cattle were discharged and loaded safely with no animal suffering an injury.

VALE COMMENT: Australia has never been able to control welfare in destination countries.

Other

IO SUMMARY: The provision of food to the cattle on board went beyond the maximum time frame of 12 hours after loading as required by ASEL (Standard 5.4). The non-compliance with S5.4 was raised with the exporter. The exporter has implemented procedures to ensure this requirement is complied with for future voyages. The IO verified compliance with this requirement during the exporter's next voyage.

VALE COMMENT: this is a major non-compliance which could have adversely affected health and welfare. If exporters are not complying with ASEL, appropriate penalties should be applied.

Conclusion

Other than the non-compliances with ASEL requirements detailed above, the IO determined that the relevant procedures relating to the management of livestock exported by sea were consistent with ASEL.

VALE COMMENT: penalties should have been incurred with these two significant ASEL breaches.