

# Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Ute*

## Cattle exported to Vietnam in May 2019

---

Report 137, October 2019

### Voyage summary

A consignment of 3,785 cattle was loaded onto the *MV Ocean Ute* in Townsville on 30 May 2019 and departed the following day destined for Hai Phong, Vietnam. The vessel completed discharge on 13 June 2019, making this a 15 day voyage.

The Independent Observer (observer) joined the vessel in Townsville prior to loading commencing.

The mortality rate for the voyage was 0.3% (11 mortalities). This did not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure of the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations and has 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 and contingencies. This included the Heavy Cattle Management Plan that was implemented to support the line of Heavy Bulls on board.

#### Loading

Loading was achieved quickly and with no issues. Cattle were loaded utilising low stress stock handling principles and cattle were penned on board with no issues.

Pen densities were in accordance with the load plan and met *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)) recommendations. The observer noted that cattle were easily able to access water and feed and would comfortably lay down to rest for periods of time.

#### Personnel

Two LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) accompanied the consignment. During the voyage the stockpersons first priority was animal welfare and they were quick to respond to animal welfare issues.

The master has 4 years experience as a master, and extensive experience as Chief Officer (CO) previously. The crew had varying degrees of livestock experience, the bosun was very experienced with livestock handling and worked well with the 2 stockpersons on board.

The crew showed concern for the welfare of the livestock and seemed to be hard working and diligent in bringing issues to the stockpersons attention. During the voyage both the master and CO were engaged on animal welfare issues.

### **Daily routine**

The stockpersons had similar routines, worked together as a team, and both were actively involved in managing treatments and any adverse conditions. Both stockpersons performed 2 inspections per day, at 7:30 am and 2:00pm with treatments following the inspections.

Daily meetings were held at 10:00am and were normally attended by the master, CO, bosun, stockpersons and observer. Items discussed include food and water consumption, feeding requirements, deck washing, mortalities, treatments, emerging issues and environmental conditions.

The livestock crew commenced morning routines at 7:30am feeding and cleaning water troughs and walkways. The second feed commenced after 10:30am. The afternoon feed commenced at 3:30pm and finish approximately 5:00pm. Chaff was fed on day 7 as a supplement to the pellets.

Night watch was undertaken each night by 3 crew working 4 hour shifts between 8:00pm and 8:00am, the period between 5:00pm and 8:00pm was covered by a crew member from day shift. Night watch duties included cleaning water and feed troughs, monitoring cattle in hospital pens and monitoring welfare of cattle.

Temperature and humidity readings were taken twice a day by the CO.

### **Feed and water**

Sufficient pellets and chaff were loaded in accordance with ASEL to cover feeding of the loaded cattle on the exporter's projected 13 day voyage, along with the required 3 day contingency.

The *Ocean Ute* has an automatic watering system to all decks, utilising a reverse osmosis system which produces 6,000 litres per hour with a storage capacity of 1,000 tonnes.

### **Ventilation**

The *Ocean Ute* provided fresh air ventilation by way of overhead PVC pipes with strategically located holes pushing fresh air across the cattle. Decks 5, 6 and 7 had hatches that opened to the outside which were left open during the voyage providing a good flow of cooling air. There were no issues with breakdown of the ventilation system and it appeared to work well.

Average temperatures over the 7 decks increased from 27°C in Townsville to 34°C by the time the vessel reached Hai Phong. There were no signs of any heat stress or discomfort during the voyage.

### **Pen conditions**

The pad condition over the entire voyage was very good, it remained dry and soft. Crew were very proactive in spreading sawdust if required to dry out any wet areas. On 2 occasions, a water

pipe burst causing minor flooding of the deck, the pipe was repaired quickly, water pumped out and sawdust spread to provide dry bedding for the cattle affected.

Bedding was spread on the floor of the pens used by the heavy bulls in accordance with the heavy cattle management plan and ASEL requirements. Some bedding by way of sawdust was spread on the ramps and alleyways prior to loading and unloading to prevent cattle slipping.

No deck washing was conducted on this voyage due to the very good condition of the pads.

### **Health and welfare**

There were 11 mortalities. The main causes of the mortalities were lame cattle that were unable to rise and sudden deaths from unknown causes. A number of cattle became lame during the first week of the voyage, these decreased significantly for the remainder of the voyage.

The stockperson isolated ill or shy feeders during to voyage to provide better access to food and additional space. Isolated cattle were moved to hospital pens with a companion to reduce any stress resulting from isolation.

### **Discharge**

The cattle continued to be fed until discharge was completed. Cattle were unloaded slowly and discharge was delayed on several occasions due to non-availability of trucks, issues with the placement of the ramp and a delay of 4 hours caused by a truck gridlock in the port caused by three other vessels unloading at the same time.

### **Conclusion**

Weather and sea conditions contributed to the good health and welfare of the cattle and the stockpersons responded to animal health issues in a timely and professional manner. The crew were very proactive in identifying and reporting issues as they arose and all cattle were discharged in good condition.

The 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 4 aisle way—no issues identified**



**Day 6 pad condition—no issues identified**



**Day 8 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 10 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 13 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**

