

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Swagman*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in August 2019

Report 178, December 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 4,465 cattle was loaded onto the *MV Ocean Swagman* at the Port of Townsville between 31 August and 1 September 2019. The vessel departed on 1 September 2019. The vessel discharged the cattle at the Port of Hon La, Vietnam, between 13 and 14 September 2019, making this a 15-day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.11% (5 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 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, and 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 cattle were observed to have sufficient space to access feed and water during loading and unloading.

No animal welfare issues were observed during loading.

Personnel

Two LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) accompanied the voyage.

The bosun and livestock crew worked well in maintaining feed, water, and pen conditions.

The master, officers, livestock crew and stockpersons were forthcoming with information and documentation, and readily answered any questions the observer posed on matters concerning the cattle's welfare.

Daily routine

Management meetings were held each day at 10:00am and were attended by the master, Chief Officer (CO), bosun, stockpersons and observer. Issues from the previous day were discussed, as

well as forward planning for the coming day, such as feed instructions, trough maintenance, cleaning and wash-down plans and the order of discharge.

The cattle were fed twice a day with top ups as requested by the stockpersons. After the morning feed, the livestock crew emptied, cleaned, and filled water troughs and cleaned alleyways.

Feed and water

Pelletised feed was loaded in accordance with the ASEL requirements and was distributed from the vessel's storage silos to feed troughs via a chute system.

Water was provided to troughs via an automatic ball-cock valve system.

Chaff was provided to the cattle as directed by the stockpersons, mainly to the bulls and cattle in the hospital pens. Excess chaff was distributed to the rest of the cattle towards the end of voyage.

The observer noted the cattle consumed adequate feed and water.

Ventilation

The ventilation system was efficient and there was no indication of ammonia build up. Temperatures and humidity levels were acceptable during the voyage.

Pen conditions

During the voyage the cattle were moved from higher-stocked pens to lighter-stocked pens to even out stocking densities and maximise access for all cattle to the feed and water troughs. Feed and water consumption rates rose steadily as the voyage progressed.

Pad conditions initially were somewhat wet from urine and minor splash from water troughs. As the voyage progressed, the pad conditions became thicker, due to the good ventilation and added sawdust, and overall the pads were generally quite dry.

All the decks were washed down on days ten and eleven.

Sawdust was provided in the hospital pens and for the ramps during loading and discharge to lessen leg impact on the cattle.

Health and welfare

There were 5 mortalities during the voyage. Two mortalities were attributed to respiratory disease (confirmed at post-mortem) and 1 downer animal was euthanised. At discharge 1 animal was euthanised due to a broken leg and 1 from presumed septicemia.

A total of 89 cattle were treated with antibiotics for respiratory disease (54), lameness (13), and injury (30).

The vessel carried two Westerguns and a captive bolt pistol, all in good working order. The veterinary medicines on-board were sufficient for the number of cattle and were in accordance with the ASEL requirements.

The observer noted there were some loose gates and railings in the pens that were considered an injury hazard, and which were progressively being attended to by the livestock crew.

There were no issues with the overall health and welfare of the cattle beyond those relating to the mortalities.

Discharge

The discharge took 36 hours and the cattle had access to clean water and fodder during discharge. No animal health or welfare issues were observed during discharge beyond the 2 mortalities recorded.

Conclusion

The observer noted that the stockpersons and the crew ensured that the health and welfare of the cattle was maintained during the voyage.

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

Representative photographs of the voyage

Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Cattle in pen—no issues identified

