

# Independent Observer summary report on *MV Yangtze Fortune*

## Cattle exported to China in December 2019

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Report 210, April 2020

### Voyage summary

A consignment of 4,657 cattle was loaded onto the MV Yangtze Fortune at Portland between 22 and 23 December 2019. Discharge occurred at the port of Huanghua, China between 10 and 11 January 2020, making this a 21 day voyage.

An Independent Observer (observer) boarded the vessel in Portland and remained on board until the commencement of discharge and disembarked the vessel prior to completion of discharge.

The mortality rate was 0.15% (7 mortalities). This did not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of these 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

**Cattle were not loaded strictly in accordance with the load plan.** A group of 70 animals from differing lines which had been treated for various reasons in the registered premises but deemed fit for loading were segregated and loaded as a group for monitoring purposes. These animals, along with some other minor loading order issues, created some intermingling of lines of cattle. The observer noted that livestock had access to food and water, with suitable space available for livestock despite this loading alteration. **During the first 7 days, stock were shuffled to even out variations in stocking density and line mixing.**

No adverse animal health or welfare issues were observed as a result of the loading process. The **final load plan was observed to be compliant** with [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 \(version 2.3\)](#) (ASEL) requirements.

## Personnel

An Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and a LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanied the voyage and were responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock.

The vessel's master, bosun and livestock crew were hard working and dedicated in their duties.

## Daily routine

A daily morning brief was held at 7:00am between the stockperson, bosun and livestock crew. Management meetings were held daily at 10:00am between the master, bosun, AAV, stockperson and IO.

Livestock crew were assigned shifts between 6:00am and 6:00pm. Nightwatch duties comprised of one crew member working 6:00pm to 12:00am and one working 12:00am to 6:00am.

## Feed and water

Feed was delivered to decks automatically and then distributed manually to troughs by the crew. Cattle were fed pelletised feed between 7:00am to 8:30am. Chaff was supplied once per day at 10:30am. Additional feeds of pellets and/or chaff were supplied to cattle depending on instructions provided by the AAV.

Although fodder was loaded in accordance with ASEL requirements, **feeding rates did not meet ASEL requirements for cattle in the first 6 days of the voyage. Despite a consignment of pregnant cattle being provided chaff twice daily, feed provided to this group was below ASEL requirements for the duration of the voyage. The observer reported that 95% of feed troughs were licked clean by the cattle within 1-2 hours after feeding. A considerable clamour for access to feed was witnessed by the observer during feeding times. Between feeding times, the animals were seen to be resting calmly. Cattle were frequently observed bullying and pulling hoses, chains and deck structures.** No adverse animal health effects were observed as a direct result of this reduced feed provision.

The vessel was fitted with desalination capability to produce water. Water was delivered automatically to troughs via hoses and a float-valve mechanism. **The observer reported multiple water leaks from the cattle disconnecting trough supply hoses. Leaks were mostly repaired within the hour by crew members, however some leaks were not rectified for 3-4 hours.** Water troughs were kept in a clean condition and the observer noted that cattle had access to clean water *ad lib* throughout the voyage despite these leaks.

## Ventilation

The ventilation system performed without interruption on this voyage. The vessel had a total of eight fully enclosed decks, with a combination of exhaust fans and ventilation supply fans that channel air through PVC piping. Decks 4 to 6 were also fitted with two doors mid-ship able to be opened if required.

On Day 6, while ambient conditions were quite favourable, **a considerable decline in the lower deck pad conditions was observed. Relatively higher humidity was noted on these decks with animals consequently demonstrating signs consistent with a heat stress score of 1, with increased water consumption and urine production observed.** This, along with the

environmental conditions, was determined to be contributing to the decline in pad conditions. It was subsequently identified that the **ventilation system had been running at less than full capacity since departure on those decks**. The AAV had an active role in ensuring that this matter was resolved. An improvement in pad conditions and wet bulb temperatures was observed following an increase in ventilation function to full capacity.

The **average wet bulb temperature (WBT) was 22.5°C, with a maximum WBT of 28°C** recorded for two days as the vessel crossed the equator.

### **Pen conditions**

Following the redistribution of cattle in the early part of the voyage, the observer reported that the stocking density met ASEL requirements. It was noted by the observer that **90-100% of cattle were able to lie down at once**.

There were **numerous water flood events on all decks early in the voyage that created localised sloppy pad conditions**. These conditions were observed to be predominantly due to the cattle on decks 1-4 chewing and disconnecting the supply hoses to water troughs, however also resulted from leaking hoses, overflow of wash-down water from decks above, or the occasional ingress of sea spray through deck openings. These leaks, coupled with reported poor drainage capacity of the vessel, resulted in localised sloppy pad conditions for some animals for several hours. In contrast to this, pads on decks 5-8 were generally in a suitable dry and firm condition for the majority of the voyage, except where **localised water leaks** created wet conditions for up to 12 hours. Sawdust was immediately distributed to pens affected by these conditions. No injuries or lamenesses were reported as a result of these pad conditions.

Deck wash-down occurred on Day 11 for decks 5-8 and on Day 12 for decks 1-4. A second wash-down was performed on Day 16 and 17. The observer noted that although **overflow of wash-down water encroached on the pens below**, the crew ensured that water troughs remained clean. Free water was brushed off the decks following subsequent wash-downs to reduce the accumulation of water in certain areas of the vessel.

### **Health and welfare**

Six mortalities were reported by the observer on this voyage. A total of 7 mortalities occurred on this voyage, with a resultant mortality rate of 0.15%. One animal was euthanased on Day 8 for an orthopaedic injury. Post-mortems were performed in three animals, identifying causes of mortality as ketosis, pneumonia and dehydration. One animal died of bloat and one animal from pulmonary thromboembolism.

The observer reported that the AAV preferred to treat most sick or injured cattle in their pens, while the stockperson transferred cattle to hospital pens. No adverse animal health or welfare issues were observed as a result of this, with the observer reporting a consistent and equal quality of care from the AAV and stockperson. A total of approximately 500 animals received treatments during the voyage for shy-feeding, lameness, respiratory disease and ill-thrift.

**Cattle experienced damp pen conditions due to water leaks and poor drainage for the majority of the voyage. The IO observed an increase in visible ringworm lesions as the voyage progressed. Other than the increase in dermatitis lesions in the cattle, no obvious negative health consequences were seen in the animals affected by the poor pad conditions.**

## **Discharge**

The observer was approved to disembark the vessel prior to the completion of discharge at Huanghua, China, for personal reasons. One mortality occurred after this time, accounting for the discrepancy between 6 reported by the observer, and the 7 official mortalities occurring on this voyage.

## **Conclusion**

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

## **Action**

The department has addressed a breach of procedures with the exporter to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock in relation to the feeding of cattle to their requirements. Considering available information, **the issues identified by the observer did not result in poor health outcomes for the cattle.**

## Representative photographs of the voyage

**Day 1 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 3 Cattle in pen—no issues identified**



**Day 5 Cattle pad condition on lower deck**



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



**Day 13 Cattle in pen—moist pad conditions developing**



**Day 16 Cattle in pen—following wash-down**

