

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Yangtze Harmony*

Cattle exported to China in December 2018

Report 56, August 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 4,975 cattle were loaded onto the *MV Yangtze Harmony* in Portland, Victoria on 23 December 2018. The vessel departed in the evening of 23 December 2018. The cattle were unloaded at the Port of Jing Tang, China from 11 to 13 January 2019 making this a 22 day voyage.

An independent observer (observer) boarded the vessel at Portland and remained on board until completion of discharge.

The mortality rate for cattle was 0.2% (ten mortalities).

The mortality rate does not exceed the reportable mortality rate as stated in the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL)*. The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the observer that accompanied the voyage. The summary has been approved by the observer who accompanied the voyage.

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 observer arrived on the vessel after loading had commenced. The cattle appeared to move well from the trucks onto the ramp and into the ship with minimal encouragement required from the stockpersons. Some pens were identified as having a higher number of cattle than specified in the load plan. Over the first few days of the voyage, the number of cattle in those pens was adjusted. Most of the hospital pens were used to hold healthy cattle but when hospital pens were required during the voyage, cattle were moved out to free up pens on the required deck. Two pens were also used for storing equipment.

Personnel

Two LiveCorp Accredited Stock persons (stockperson) accompanied the voyage responsible for the health and welfare of the livestock. The Master had several years of experience and was

observed on the livestock decks. The Chief Officer (CO) was experienced and was seen on the cattle decks each day, especially during the time of water supply issues. The bosun supervised the crew, received instructions from the CO and carried out requests from the stockpersons. The vessel had two shifts of crew of approximately seven each.

Daily routine

The two shifts of crew worked either from 6.00am to 12.00pm or 12.00pm to 6.00pm. The morning feeding, watering and cleaning routine commenced at 6.00am. The troughs were emptied, cleaned, repaired or replaced if necessary.

A daily meeting was held every day at 10.00am with the CO, bosun, stockpersons and the observer. The Master was present on some days. At the meeting, issues that had arisen were discussed, instructions to bosun regarding livestock husbandry matters and the daily reports.

One night watchperson was rostered on between 6.00pm and 6.00am. The role of the night watchperson was to ensure feed and water troughs were upright and clean, check for leaking water hoses, monitor ventilation system and report sick animals or mortalities to the stockperson.

Feed and water

Feed consisted of pellets and chaff. The morning feeding of pellets commenced at 6.00am. The troughs were manually filled. From day four of the voyage, the cattle were fed chaff at 11.00am each day. At 9.30am, on day 11 until day 17, the cattle received a top up of pellets. The afternoon feeding of pellets was at 3.30pm.

The water was supplied to the cattle in each pen by troughs that fill automatically and controlled by a valve operated by a float sensor. The observer noted that ad lib supply of water to the upper decks was not continuous on days 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17 and 18 as evidenced by the presence of empty water troughs. Remedial action by the crew was undertaken on each occasion to resolve the issue and supply water. After longer outages, the cattle were queuing to drink.

In addition, some water troughs were identified as contaminated with faeces early in the voyage. The crew took remedial action and was not an issue for the remainder of the voyage.

Ventilation

The ventilation system worked well during the voyage without failures and provided a good flow of air onto all decks and pens.

Temperatures were taken once daily at 10.30am each day on each deck. During one of the daily readings, the observer noted that the gauge was not functioning fully. A new gauge was obtained.

Pen conditions

The condition of the pad in the majority of pens were acceptable on the voyage. Wood shavings were laid on the floors before loading. Water logging of pens caused by leaks of the water supply system were normally quickly repaired and wood shavings used to improve the conditions. On day two, several pens on deck one had water inundation caused by overflow of the bilge.

Two wash downs of the decks were undertaken on days 7/8 and 15/16. The pads did become wet, muddy and sloppy when the vessel arrived in China with the very cold temperatures contributing. The supply of wood shavings had been exhausted by providing coverage to ramps, races and portable yards.

Health and welfare

The two stockpersons examined the cattle routinely twice daily. They were skilful in identifying cattle that needed attention for injuries or illness. The drafting and handling skills were considered good and caused minimal distress.

During the voyage, a variety of conditions were identified including pinkeye, bloat, hernia, lameness and shy feeders. Once identified, the cattle were relocated to hospital pens and provided with appropriate treatments. The stockperson considered the cause of the mortalities that were subject to a post mortem as trauma, infected legs or generalised infection. A few cattle on each deck were found to have clinical signs of ringworm.

Humidity was high in the days before and after passing the equator but the cattle did not exhibit signs of heat stress and respiratory scores were normal throughout the voyage.

Discharge

The ship's crew manned the decks, internal ramp and exit race and the cattle were able to move well through to the trucks. The open top single deck trucks only had one swinging gated. To close the gate the truck had to move away from the yards to allow for the gate to swing. A metal pipe was threaded through from one side to the other side to stop the cattle jumping out the back of the truck whilst the gate was being closed.

Conclusion

The stockperson and crew managed the cattle well and handled them with minimal force.

The water supply system struggled to meet the demands of the cattle on the upper decks. Ad lib water supply was not supplied on various upper decks on nine individual days of the voyage. The lack of drainage in walkways, water leaks and overflow from the bilge contributed to numerous incidents of wet pens with repairs and clean-ups required. Overall, the water issues and pen issues did not appear to adversely impact on the health and welfare of the livestock.

The department referred the water supply issues to Australian Maritime Safety Authority for consideration relating to the *MV Yangtze Harmony*.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Cattle in pen – water in pens



Day 7 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 8 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 15 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 15 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 17 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

