

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Shorthorn Express*

Cattle exported to Indonesia in February 2019

Report 75, September 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 3,062 cattle for two exporters were loaded onto the *MV Shorthorn Express* at the Port of Darwin on 8 February 2019. The vessel departed in the evening of 8 February 2019. The vessel discharged the cattle at Panjang, Indonesia between 14 and 15 February 2019, making this an 8 day voyage.

An Independent Observer (observer) boarded the vessel at Darwin and remained on board until completion of discharge.

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.03% (1 mortality). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The cause of this mortality was not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the observer. 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

Water and fodder were provided within 12 hours of the first cattle being loaded on the vessel. Based on a visual appraisal of the loaded cattle, the observer did not have any concerns regarding the stocking density.

Personnel

The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) who accompanied this voyage had considerable experience and demonstrated a practical approach to their role and was diligent in the observation of the cattle.

The master had overall responsibility for the vessel, the livestock and all personnel. The observer found the vessel command to be professional and accommodating. The Chief Officer (CO) worked closely with the stockperson and the bosun. The CO was observed on the cargo decks at least once daily evaluating the condition of the livestock.

The crew worked well as a team to manually feed out the fodder to the cattle twice a day.

Daily routine

A management meeting was held each day at 10:00am and were attended by the master, CO and stockperson. The attendees discussed the daily routine, livestock management and included treatments performed and other husbandry issues.

The cattle were fed twice daily and in between the feed times, the crew cleaned water troughs and cleared the aisles of spilt fodder.

Overnight duties were assigned to 2 crew members who each worked one of two night shifts to maintain a supplementary clean water supply.

Feed and water

The fodder was stored in 2 silos above the vessel's sun deck. Each pen had several nose bowls for the water supply and at least 2 long troughs for fodder. The stockperson added an additional water supply via a long trough in each pen to ensure the cattle always had effective access to water. The observer noted the maintenance of the troughs was acceptable.

Ventilation

The vessel had 5 livestock decks and has variably sized air supply ducts over the pen spaces within the livestock decks. The airflow is directed into the pen spaces.

During loading in the Port of Darwin the observer noted several areas on the cattle decks that were detectably warmer and more humid than other areas on the vessel. However, the observer did not see any signs consistent with heat stress in the cattle either at the time or during the voyage.

The temperature readings were taken once per day using a whirling hygrometer and the temperatures were included in the stockperson's daily report.

Pen conditions

The pens on the vessel were variable in shape and size. The numbering of pens and pen areas were missing for most pens and unreadable on most of the others. The deck flooring was a rough painted decking that provided a non-slip but abrasive surface.

This voyage was a short haul voyage of less than 10 days and therefore, under the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL)* requirements, did not require sawdust for bedding to be loaded. Some sawdust was available on the vessel from a previous voyage and was used in a hospital pen.

A mix of manure and spilt fodder built up in the pens over the course of the voyage and provided a cushion layer for the resting cattle. Any fodder that was spilt was utilised to absorb spilt water.

Health and welfare

The stockman was diligent in the observation of the cattle during the voyage. Several cattle were treated for lameness using antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medications.

One animal that was unable to rise and was euthanased after the provision of some treatments. A post mortem examination was not undertaken as the vessel was in the port of Panjang. The cause of the recumbency was not definitively established.

Discharge

The crew were effective in moving the cattle during the discharge process. The cattle were unloaded into around 60 small single deck trucks. The unloading process took some time because of a long period of turnaround of the trucks returning from the feedlot. Despite this the observer did not identify any animal health or welfare concerns.

Conclusion

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 3 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 4 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 4 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 4 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 5 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

