

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Greymen Express*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in February 2019

Report 78, October 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 2,601 cattle were loaded onto the *MV Greymen Express* at Darwin on 9 and 10 February 2019. The vessel departed on 10 February 2019. The cattle were discharged at the Port of Haiphong, Vietnam between 17 and 18 February 2019, making this a 10 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 0.038% (1 mortality). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The cause of the mortality was not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations and has 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 and contingencies.

Loading

The cattle were loaded in accordance with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL)* requirements and the load plan. On day 4, the observer conducted a random check of the numbers of animals in pens against the load plan. Only very minor discrepancies were found.

Personnel

The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) who accompanied this voyage worked well with the crew and local stock personnel when loading and discharging the cattle.

The majority of the crew were allocated to feeding, ensuring water was available and maintaining clean access areas. The crew and the stockperson were very professional in their approach and worked hard to maintain the welfare of the livestock.

Daily routine

A management meeting was held each day at around 11:30am and was attended by the Chief Officer (CO), stockperson and observer. The meeting included a report from the stockperson about the welfare of the animals, discussion and instruction on any changes that were required to the feeding regime.

The night watch duties were undertaken by 2 crew members who worked two nightshifts with 1 watch person allocated per shift.

The stockperson checked the livestock at least twice daily.

Feed and water

The vessel has silos that hold the pelletised fodder at the stern of the ship. The pellets are pumped by an automated system to chutes at multiple points on each deck. Crew manually transport the fodder from the chutes to the troughs. Chaff was loaded and stored on the upper deck. Chaff was fed at the discretion of the stockperson.

Plastic water troughs hang from the outside of the pen rails. Most pens have space for three troughs. The crew worked very hard to maintain the feed and water supply to the livestock and manage to keep up with the consumption so that the animals could feed ad lib.

The vessel has two desalination plants to produce drinking water. Water is supplied automatically to 2 nose troughs per pen. These units are triggered by snout pressure of cattle to supply water into the bowl. The crew flushed out the water bowls twice per day to ensure the cattle had access to clean water. From day 6, the crew provided water by manually filling one of the available plastic troughs for each pen.

Ventilation

All livestock decks are fully enclosed. Nine hatches are present in the top deck (Deck 5). Fresh air is provided to the cattle pens by the ventilation system via large PVC pipes above.

Conditions on deck and outside were hot and humid with maximum temperature of 31°C dry bulb and humidity of 80%. Temperatures were recorded once per day using a hand held instrument, prior to 11:00am, so that the readings could be included in the daily reports.

Pen conditions

Deck washing was not undertaken because of the short duration of the voyage. Each day the laneways were swept and the collected pellets were put into the pens. The mixture of dried pellets and deposited manure formed a moist but friable pad.

Health and welfare

The crew were professional in their approach and worked hard to maintain the welfare of the livestock. The observer noted that electric prodders were used during discharge but not excessively.

The behaviour of the cattle altered significantly during the voyage. At the start of the journey the cattle were flighty but were significantly more relaxed at the end of the journey. The welfare of the livestock was maintained.

Five animals were treated on the journey for lameness. The lame cattle recovered sufficiently for unloading. There was one mortality with an unknown cause.

Towards the end of the voyage, the observer noted one animal with a sore eye that did not receive treatment. This was not in accordance with the exporter voyage instructions.

Discharge

The livestock were unloaded calmly and efficiently by the crew. The observer noted the importing stock agent employees used electric prodders on the cattle as they were transiting on the ramp between the vessel and the trucks. The observer considered that while the use of the electric prodders were not overly excessive it may have been more than what is viewed as good practice by current Australian standards.

Conclusion

Excluding the treatment of the animal with a sore eye, the exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements. The issue has been addressed with the exporter.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 1 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



Day 7 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 8 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

