

VALE COMMENT ON IO REPORT 183: BRAHMAN EXPRESS, TOWNSVILLE TO PANJANG SEPT 2019

Loading

IO SUMMARY: The stocking density allowed over 50% of animals to be able to rest simultaneously.

VALE COMMENT: 100% of animals should be able to rest simultaneously.

Daily routine

IO SUMMARY: Cattle were fed three times per day from early morning, late morning and mid-afternoon with top-ups as required. The cattle were fed 4 times each day for the first four days after which the stockperson noted the cattle did not seem to be eating the desired quantity of fodder.

Therefore on Day 5 the stockperson added an additional top up feed of pellets which resulted in higher rates of feeding.

VALE COMMENT: it is not clear whether cattle were fed three times or four times daily.

Feed and water

IO SUMMARY: A prescribed feeding and watering schedule was outlined in the exporter voyage instructions for the master and the stockperson. However the instructions made no mention of chaff feeding, and required two feed-outs with no top-up. It also required set manual watering times from the start of the voyage. Due to these issues, the stockperson and crew developed a feeding and watering routine over the first half of the voyage that the observer considered was more practical, and which resulted in excellent animal health and welfare outcomes for the consignment.

VALE COMMENT: the stockperson was clearly experienced. ASEL does not specify any requirement for cattle above the 26th parallel so it does not seem to be an issue of ASEL non-compliance.

Ventilation

IO SUMMARY: The wet and dry bulb temperature and humidity were taken daily. The aft portion of Deck 1 on the vessel, which was surrounded by the engine room bulkhead, recorded the highest dry bulb temperatures during the voyage and no adverse animal health or welfare issues were observed on this part of the vessel.

VALE COMMENT: no wet bulb temperatures provided in the report but firm pen pad conditions suggest that heat stress did not occur.

Health and welfare

IO SUMMARY: The first mortality was consistent with pneumonia, and there was occasional evidence of possible bovine respiratory disease (BRD) in the consignment. The stockperson treated several suspect cases of BRD as soon as possible from Day 6 onwards. During the voyage the stockperson administered approximately 35 individual treatments for lameness, possible BRD, and wounds.

On Day 2 of the voyage, an animal was hospitalised due to weakness in the hind legs. After several days of treatment there was no improvement in its condition and it was humanely euthanased.

VALE COMMENT: as per routine, definitive cause of death is rarely provided by stockpersons. Stockperson training does not include veterinary pathology.

IO SUMMARY: There were no cattle observed with symptoms of heat stress during the voyage.

VALE COMMENT: consistent with VALE's conclusions.

Conclusion

IO SUMMARY: The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements, apart from minor non-compliances noted above.

VALE COMMENT: no non-compliances were detailed. Were they removed by the Department?

Representative photographs of the voyage

IO SUMMARY: Hospital pen. No issues

VALE COMMENT: the animals in this pen appear to be in poor body condition, especially compared to other animals. The voyage length was such that this must have been pre-existing. It would appear that animals in poor body condition were loaded, which could potentially be an ASEL non-compliance. Animals in poor body condition from rangeland properties (ie not observed closely) could have "ill thrift", a loading rejection criteria, so ideally would be rejected. Emaciated animals are required to be rejected under ASEL.