

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Shearer*

Cattle exported to Indonesia in December 2019

Report 208, April 2020

Voyage summary

A total of 7,345 cattle were loaded onto the MV Ocean Shearer at Townsville between 9 and 10 December 2019 for 3 exporters. An additional 9,756 cattle were loaded at Darwin between 14 and 15 December 2019 for 2 exporters. The first discharge was at the port of Jakarta, Indonesia between 19 and 22 December 2019. The second discharge was at Panjang, Indonesia, which completed on 24 December 2019, making this a 16 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate was 0.04% (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 exporters.

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 loaded according to the load plan, which was compliant with the [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 \(version 2.3\)](#) (ASEL) requirements.

A delay occurred at the second port of loading in Darwin. All cattle were provided with adequate access to feed and water within 12 hours of loading with no negative health or welfare issues observed at either port.

Personnel

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

The vessel's master communicated well with the Chief Officer (CO) and boson. All personnel conducted their duties in a professional manner with animal welfare of utmost importance.

Daily routine

Meetings were held daily at 10:00am with the master, CO, boson, AAV and stockpersons in attendance to discuss daily management plans. Topics discussed included feeding, deck washing and any issues with livestock.

Feed and water

Fodder was loaded in accordance with ASEL requirements.

One exporter self-nominated a feeding regime above ASEL requirements. Although fodder loaded for this exporter was in accordance with ASEL, it failed to accommodate for the additional feeding instructions proposed by the exporter. This was identified on the first day of the voyage by the CO and managed successfully. Feed was provided above ASEL requirements but below the level directed in the additional feeding instructions to ensure adequate fodder remained as contingency. There were no negative health or welfare implications as a result of this miscalculation, with affected cattle demonstrating a feed consumption well above ASEL requirements.

The vessel was fitted with reverse osmosis equipment to produce water. Water was delivered automatically via a float-valve mechanism to troughs. Water troughs were required to be cleaned every three hours. At times, this was not achieved, however there were no adverse health or welfare outcomes observed upon cattle as a result, with this issue being rectified in a timely manner.

Cattle were fed at 7:30am, 10:30am and 1:00pm daily via automatic gravity-fed delivery pipes to each pen. Additional supplementary feeding of pellets was performed at 3:00pm. Chaff was supplied to cattle manually by the crew.

Shy feeders were identified and either managed in their pen or transferred to a hospital pen.

Ventilation

The ventilation system functioned without interruption on this voyage.

The observer commented that the rear of Deck 4 and 5 had a reduced level of airflow and that these areas were relatively hotter than other areas of the vessel as a result. The observer reported no evidence of heat stress and no adverse health or welfare outcomes for the cattle in these areas.

The average wet bulb temperature was 29.8°C, with a maximum of 32°C.

Pen conditions

The observer reported that all animals were loaded in compliance with ASEL. An additional 30% pen space was provided to horned cattle in accordance with ASEL. There was adequate pen space available to cattle, with the observer noting up to 80% of animals able to lie down at one time.

One animal had to be euthanased due to an injury sustained after a drain hole became uncovered in the corner of a pen.

Deck wash-down occurred on 17 December for Deck 6 and Deck 5 Special and on 18 December for decks 1-5. Decks 7-9 had no wash-down performed, as cattle on these decks were loaded last and were due for discharge first. The observer reported that pen conditions on these decks were acceptable. The observer noted that the wash-down improved the temperature and humidity conditions on decks. During the wash-down, water troughs were not cleaned as regularly, however no negative health or welfare effects were observed due to this.

Overall, the pad conditions appeared soft and comfortable on this voyage with no adverse effects on animal welfare.

Health and welfare

A total of 7 mortalities occurred on this voyage. If necessary, cattle were euthanased promptly, with post-mortems performed by the AAV as required. Reasons for euthanasia were for gastroenteritis, a downer steer not responding to treatment in a hospital pen, a steer with lameness/injury non-responsive to treatment and one animal due to injuries sustained during discharge. One animal required euthanasia after its hind limb was caught in a drain hole, resulting in a broken limb.

Shy-feeders, injured or ill cattle were identified and treated in a timely manner either in pens or were transferred to hospital pens. A total of 19 animals were treated for lameness, five were hospitalised as shy-feeders and four were treated for pneumonia.

Overall, there were no other issues with the health and welfare of the livestock.

Discharge

Discharge was completed at two ports; Jakarta and Panjang, Indonesia.

One steer was euthanased due to injuries sustained during discharge. On the day of discharge at the port of Jakarta, one steer was deemed unfit for discharge and was euthanased.

The observer reported that animals were handled appropriately at the discharge port.

Conclusion

The observer noted that the cattle travelled well on this voyage and there were no significant health or welfare issues identified.

Action

Although fodder was loaded in accordance with ASEL requirements, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment addressed a breach of one exporter's procedures to load sufficient fodder to meet those outlined in the Voyage Instructions.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 – Cattle in pen. No issues identified.



Day 4 - Cattle in pen. No issues identified.



Day 6 – Laneway after feeding. No issues identified.



Day 9 - Cattle in pen. No issues identified.



Day 11 – Cattle in pen during discharge. No issues identified.



Day 12 - Cattle in pen during discharge. No issues identified.

