

Independent Observer summary report on *GL Kai Hou*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in March 2019

Report 97, October 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 1,229 cattle was loaded on to the *GL Kai Hou* on 16 March 2019 in Fremantle. Due to the death of a crew member and delays at Haiphong anchorage in Vietnam, the duration of the voyage was extended beyond the planned 12 days. The vessel completed discharge in Vietnam on 3 April 2019, making this a 19 day voyage.

The mortality rate for the voyage was 0.24% (3 cattle). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. 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 and has been approved by the observer who accompanied the voyage.

Independent observations of the implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of cattle

Exporter documentation

Exporter arrangements were available to address procedures relating to cattle management, from loading through to discharge, including contingencies.

Loading

The vessel was not loaded as per the load plan. Some pens, particularly on the lower decks, were initially loaded in excess of the load plan. The stockperson adjusted pens, which appeared to have higher pen densities within the first couple of days of the voyage. The majority of the pens were within *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)) requirements. In all pens at least 50% of the livestock were able to lie down at the same time, and in many pens 100% of livestock were seen lying down at once.

During loading, and the first night, water was only provided via automated bowls. It is unclear if cattle were familiar with the bowls, or if they made full use of them. Crew were observed moving through the vessel filling the bowls manually, and no impact on animal welfare was reported. The provision of fodder to cattle on-board went beyond the maximum time frame of 12 hours after loading as required by ASEL (Standard 5.4).

This non-compliance with S5.4 was raised with the exporter. The exporter has implemented procedures to ensure this requirement is complied with on future voyages. The observer on the exporter's following voyage verified compliance with this requirement.

Personnel

The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) was experienced in cattle voyages, was dedicated to the welfare of the stock and appeared skilled in his role. He handled the stock competently and calmly.

Personnel included the master, the Chief Officer (CO) and other crew. Some of the crew looked after the cattle, and did not have any other duties. During loading and unloading, additional crew members provided assistance.

The crew were all competent in handling of cattle, with varying degrees of expertise. Both the CO and the bosun were approachable, however there did seem to be some difficulty in communications. The bosun and the CO were not particularly responsive to requests from the stockperson e.g. the application of sawdust in wet areas.

Daily routine

Each morning, the stockperson would conduct an inspection of all decks prior to the daily meeting held between the bosun, CO and the stockperson at approximately 6:30am. Feeding, watering and any issues were discussed. The stockperson and CO also met on the bridge daily at around 11:00am to submit the stockpersons daily report. Each day, feeding would occur at 7:00am, 10:30am and 3:30pm. In between these times the crew were seen, performing other tasks such as attending to nose bowls, pad management and repairs.

The night watch ran from 6:00pm to 6:00am, in 3 shifts of 4 hours duration. The night watchperson was required to report back to bridge every 30 minutes as to their whereabouts and the conditions on the cattle decks.

Feed and water

Calculations indicated ample feed stores had been loaded; well within ASEL requirements for the proposed 12 day voyage. Access to feed was adequate for most of the voyage. However, on days 13–16 feeding was reduced to twice a day when the voyage length increased due to the required diversion to Indonesia following the death of a crew member. During this time, both the observer and the stockperson noted that the cattle were hungry. Aggressive feeding behaviour was witnessed with cattle pushing and bullying to reach the troughs. On day 17, the fodder rate was able to be increased, and this increased rate was fed until the completion of discharge.

Access to water during the voyage was generally good. However, it was observed on two occasions that there was no water, or very little water, available to nose bowls on Decks A and B. The observer has clarified that water was unavailable for less than 12 hours and there was no impact on animal welfare. The shortage was caused by supply being interrupted when changing between water tanks.

Ventilation

The maximum temperatures reached during the voyage were 33°C dry bulb temperature, 31°C wet bulb temperature. Ventilation to the pens was good.

When heat started to increase, the stockperson requested the crew move fodder stacks, which had been placed on hatches, to improve air flow.

The *Bos indicus* cattle in all areas of the vessel did not show any signs of heat stress during the voyage and overall appeared to handle to hot and humid conditions much better than the *Bos taurus* cattle.

On days 5, 6 and 7, *Bos taurus* breeds on Decks C and E showed signs of heat stress with increased respiratory rates and some isolated cases of open mouth panting. Affected pens on these decks were consistently hotter than the rest of the vessel. The stockperson destocked the affected pens and provided electrolytes in an attempt to reduce the impact of the heat. The first mortality of the voyage occurred in these pens, and was attributed to heat stress. Increased humidity associated with washing on day 4 seemed to increase the heat stress on these cattle. By day 10, these cattle appeared to be less heat affected, with night time temperatures dropping from day 10 onwards. The observer has clarified that the deck washing was performed with the welfare of the animals as a primary consideration and, on balance, led to improved welfare outcomes.

Pen conditions

Sawdust was provided to pens containing heavy cattle, and in hospital pens, throughout the voyage. Sawdust was only applied to the other pens to manage pad condition, as directed by the stockperson.

When washing pens, all decks drained to Deck E. This caused a large build-up of water on Deck E during the washing process with cattle standing in water for a number of hours. The vessels extraction pumps did not seem to be able to keep up with the volume of water and waste produced by the deck washing process. The observer has clarified that they were unable to determine whether the incidence of lameness was greater where water inundation occurred as a result of poor drainage. Remedial action was to be undertaken by the vessel to correct this issue and will be monitored by the department when an observer is on-board.

There were two pens of note that experienced heavy water logging due to rain ingress from the top deck. Sawdust was applied to manage the pad condition, however these pens were observed in notably poorer condition.

Health and welfare

There were 3 mortalities on the voyage. One animal suffering from heat stress was euthanised and another animal was found dead in its pen. A third animal died, following unsuccessful attempts to free it, when its head was caught in pen rails.

Other cattle displayed symptoms of either lameness, snotty noses, eye problems, general ill thrift or bloat. The stockperson moved cattle in and out of hospital pens as required, or reduced pen stocking density, to assist those affected cattle.

The observer found the on-board medications and equipment to be compliant with ASEL requirements; with the exception of 40ml syringes which the vessel did not have in the appropriate quantities. This was brought to the stockperson's attention and was noted on their replenishment request list.

The crew reported health and welfare issues to the stockperson in a timely manner. The stockperson was vigilant in observing cattle, identifying those that were unwell and administering treatments in a timely manner.

Discharge

Discharge was completed in a series of 3–4 hour blocks as trucks became available. Feed and water were maintained to all decks throughout discharge. Cattle were handled quietly and efficiently. No issues were identified during discharge.

Conclusion

Other than the failure to provide feed to cattle within 12 hours of loading, relevant procedures relating to the management of cattle exported by sea were consistent with the ASEL and additional conditions of export.

There were a number of challenges presented to the crew and stockperson during the course of this voyage, as a result of the extensive delay due to the death of a crew member. The stockperson worked well to maintain overall animal health and welfare in a difficult situation.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 5 cattle in pen – no issues identified



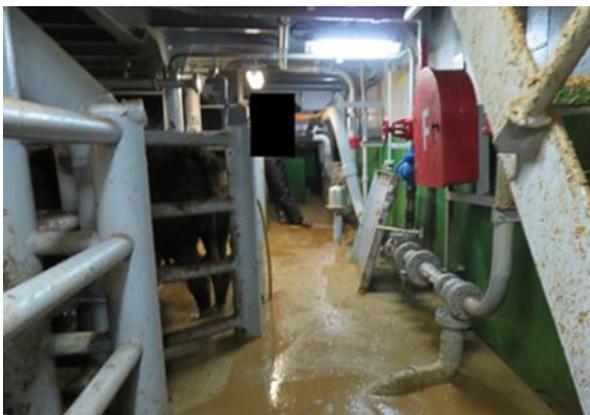
Day 8 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 11 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 14 Lower Deck E – build-up of drainage



Day 17 Cattle in Pen – no issues

