



Australian Government

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Swagman*

Cattle exported to China in January 2024

July 2025

Voyage summary

Livestock: 7,244 cattle

Vessel: *MV Ocean Swagman*

Loading location and date: Portland, 30 January 2024

Vessel departure location and date: Portland, 31 January 2024

Discharge location and dates: Huanghua, China, from 20 February 2024 to 21 February 2024

Voyage length: 23 days

Independent Observer: Boarded at Portland and remained onboard until completion of discharge.

Voyage mortality rate: 0.17% (12 mortalities). These mortalities are unlikely to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

Notifiable mortality rate: 0.5% for cattle

Summary of observations

This report summarises key observations of the implementation and effectiveness of exporter arrangements to ensure the health and welfare of livestock. The report has been approved by the observer who accompanied the voyage.

Exporter documentation

The observer reported no issues regarding exporter documentation.

Loading

Based on observations made during this voyage, the exporter arrangements relating to loading were appropriate and effective in managing livestock health and welfare.

Personnel

Based on observations made during this voyage, the exporter arrangements relating to personnel were appropriate and effective in managing livestock health and welfare.

Daily routine

Based on observations made during this voyage, the exporter arrangements relating to daily routine were appropriate and effective in managing livestock health and welfare.

Feed and water

The observer noted that on days 21, 22 and 23 of the voyage, only cattle in hospital pens were fed chaff and the remaining cattle were not. The Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) requires that at least 1% of the required daily feed is chaff or hay. No adverse effects on animal health and welfare were observed as a result of chaff not being fed.

Ventilation and voyage conditions

The maximum wet bulb deck temperature reported by the accredited stockperson during the voyage was 30.3°C, which was recorded on day 6 on deck 7.

On a previous voyage on the MV *Ocean Swagman*, the observer noted that animals penned close to engine rooms had shown signs of panting or mild heat stress. For this voyage, the observer monitored cattle in the known hot spots and did not identify any health or welfare impacts.

The minimum dry bulb deck temperature reported by the stockperson during the voyage was 0.9 °C, which was recorded on day 22 on deck 6. On the same day, the observer recorded a minimum dry bulb temperature of -0.7°C next to the loading ramp on deck 5. No adverse effects on animal health and welfare were observed as a result of the temperatures throughout the voyage.

The exporter did not prepare in writing a contingency plan that addresses all adverse weather conditions, including for conditions likely to expose the livestock to cold stress, during the voyage, which is a requirement of the ASEL standard 4.1.18.

Based on observations made during this voyage, the exporter arrangements relating to ventilation were appropriate and effective in managing livestock health and welfare.

Pen conditions

Based on observations made during this voyage, the exporter arrangements relating to pen conditions were appropriate and effective in managing livestock health and welfare.

Health and welfare

No systemic issues observed.

The stockperson reported that:

- 1) During the voyage, 196 cattle were treated for conditions including lameness, foot conditions, musculoskeletal conditions, eye conditions, shy feeders, gastrointestinal conditions and respiratory conditions.
- 2) A total of 12 cattle mortalities occurred on this voyage, with 3 mortalities euthanised and 9 found deceased.
 - 1) The stockperson performed post mortems for 3 mortalities, with 2 attributed to gastrointestinal issues and one post mortem identifying no abnormalities. One postmortem could not be performed due to decomposition, 2 due to proximity to shore and 6 as discharge was occurring.

Discharge

Based on observations made during this voyage, the exporter arrangements relating to discharge were appropriate and effective in managing livestock health and welfare.

Department actions

While no adverse animal health and welfare outcomes arising from exporter arrangements were observed, the department required the exporter to report on corrective actions taken to ensure livestock on future voyages are fed chaff every day as required by the ASEL standard 5.3.7.

The exporter reviewed and amended their contingency plans to address the requirement of ASEL standard 4.1.18 and provided these to the department.

Representative photographs of voyage

Day 1 Cattle in pen — no issue identified



Day 8 Cattle in pen — no issues identified



Day 6 Cattle eating roughage — no issues identified



Day 13 Cattle in hospital pen — no issues identified



Day 18 Cattle feeding — no issues identified



Day 19 Cattle in pen — no issues identified



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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