

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Yangtze Fortune*

Cattle exported to China in July 2018

Report 12, August 2019

Voyage summary

The *MV Yangtze Fortune* was originally a container ship which was converted to carry livestock. The vessel has eight decks (all enclosed).

The *MV Yangtze Fortune* departed Portland, Victoria on 8 July 2018 with 2 192 slaughter cattle loaded destined for Ningbo, China. The voyage completed discharge on 26 July 2018, making this a 20 day voyage.

The Independent Observer (observer) joined the vessel in Portland.

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 1.51% (33 mortalities). This exceeded the reportable mortality rate of 1% for cattle on a voyage of over 10 days.

This voyage is the subject of a mortality investigation as it exceeded the reportable mortality level. The mortality investigation report has been published on the department's website.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the observer from loading in Portland until discharge at Ningbo, China. The summary has been approved by the observer who accompanied this voyage.

Implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of livestock

Exporter documentation

Consignment Specific Export Plans (CSEPs) were available for cattle addressing procedures relating to provision of fodder, water, bedding (cattle only) medication, humane destruction, livestock officer instructions from loading through to discharge and contingency plans. The instructions included in the CSEPs were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.

Loading

The health and welfare of animals was maintained during the loading process and no animals were rejected at the wharf.

Personnel

A total of 33 crew were on-board during the voyage. The Master had completed over 200 voyages on livestock vessels, and the 17 livestock crew all had livestock consignment experience. The crew showed concern for the welfare of the livestock, and seemed to be hard working and diligent, and were observed to be quiet and patient with the cattle.

An Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and LiveCorp Accredited Stock person (stock person) accompanied the consignment.

Daily routine

The AAV and stock person had similar routines and worked together as a team. The AAV liaised closely with the Bosun and Chief Officer (CO) with regards to livestock management.

Daily meetings were held each morning with the Master, CO, AAV, stock person and the observer to discuss weather forecast; deck temperatures, conditions and wash down schedules; fodder, sawdust and water consumption; livestock status, general health and treatments; and any issues identified.

Feed and water

The livestock crew commenced morning routines at 7:00am, performing pellet feeding and watering duties, along with trough and alley cleaning. Chaff feeding and general cleaning and maintenance duties were performed before lunch, and a second pellet feed and clean performed before 5:00pm. Two night watchmen were rostered on each night who were to notify the Bridge, Master or AAV of any issues which may arise during their shift. Their main job related to ensuring water and feed troughs were functioning, and to measure water temperatures and salinity.

Fodder was loaded in excess of ASEL standards to feed the cattle for the estimated 16 day voyage to China (including discharge) and the required three day contingency. Fodder remained on board upon completion of discharge. The *Yangtze Fortune* has an automatic watering system to all decks.

Ventilation

The vessel's ventilation system delivers air to each pen by pipes with strategically located outlet holes. The ventilation performed well throughout the voyage, and there did not appear to be particular hot spots of any concern. Some pens on Decks 4, 5 and 6 only had two pipes instead of the usual three. These pens were monitored closely and their performance in terms of heat stress indicators and pad quality did not differ significantly from other pens.

Pen conditions

The AAV and stock person were actively involved in deck wash down. All decks were washed three times during the voyage. The observer reported varying degrees of pad condition ranging from firm to sloppy (reported the day before wash down). Roof leaks on Deck's 7 and 8 affected a number of pens, resulting in the pad becoming very sloppy. Drainage issues, low water pressure and equipment defects resulted in prolonged, inefficient and ineffective deck washing which in turn placed additional stress on the cattle and crew, and disrupted feeding routines.

The observer noted that the third deck wash was a lot quicker than the previous washes. After this wash it was noted that there were instances of short cuts resulting in issues such as water troughs being empty for more than two hours, pellets not being fed a second time, troughs being topped up but not cleaned, and cattle standing for a long time during and after deck washing.

Health and welfare

The temperature and relative humidity on departure from Portland were about 17 degrees Celsius (dry bulb) and 70%. Humidity reached a maximum of 92% (in conjunction with 30 degrees Celsius) on Day 7, with no relief for the remainder of the voyage with readings staying around 32 degrees Celsius and 86% humidity. Cattle on Decks 4—8 generally showed elevated panting with a closed mouth, and it was usual to find 2—3 cattle per deck showing open mouth panting. Cattle on Decks 1—3 generally did not progress beyond elevated panting with a closed mouth. The AAV treated 35 cattle during the voyage—28 of these for lameness. The majority of these responded to treatment and were discharged.

Mortalities attributed to heat stress occurred in line with the increase and subsequent maintenance of temperature and humidity. The first occurred on Day 6, continuing through to discharge with between one and four heat stress mortalities reported on all days except one (Day 9).

The consignment reached the reportable level of 1% on Day 14, with some of the heat stress mortalities found to have underlying conditions during autopsy (for example, infected joints, peritonitis and fatty liver).

Discharge

The animal's health and welfare was maintained throughout discharge and there were no concerns raised by the observer about the discharge procedures.

Other

Water and feed troughs were not properly secured to the rails and were easily (and regularly) pushed off the rails by cattle spilling contents, with an average of 4—5 troughs down per deck at any given time. This limited the availability of feed and prevented ad lib water to the cattle. In an attempt to minimise the impact of this, the ball in the automatic water troughs was set to a low level to minimise spillages and prevent flooding of pens.

Several issues were identified relating to poor quality water hoses and trough connections, broken isolating switches and a lack of spare parts including:

- hoses were regularly splitting causing issues as there was no spare hoses and a shortage of clips to perform repairs.
- hose to trough connections were not of good quality, were regularly broken and there were no spares to perform repairs.
- isolating switches from the water supply lines were not working so an entire row of troughs had to be turned off while a trough connection was being fixed.
- the above features combined with the troughs regularly being pushed off the rails, meant it was not possible to leave the deck water on without supervision, meaning many troughs were disconnected each day when staff were not on the deck.

Conclusion

The observer determined that the relevant procedures relating to the management of livestock exported by sea were consistent with the ASEL.

The observer noted the crew were to be commended for their performance and any issues noted to the Bosun quickly corrected. However, the additional pressure placed on the crew during this voyage due to the issues outlined above was noted.

Following this voyage, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority applied conditions to the Yangtze Fortune's Australian Certificate for the Carriage of Livestock (ACCL) preventing it from undertaking long-haul voyages (i.e. >10 days) until actions were taken to address the drainage and trough issues. The issues were rectified and an ACCL was issued without condition in October 2018.

Observer's placed on two subsequent voyages on board the MV *Yangtze Fortune* noted minor issues with leaking water pipes and drainage. These issues were addressed quickly, and the observer's noted no impact to the welfare of the livestock.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 3 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 6 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 6 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 12 —Alleyway no issues identified



Day 12 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

