

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Bison Express*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in November 2018

Report 34, October 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 1,827 cattle were loaded onto the MV *Bison Express* at Fremantle on 9 and 10 November December 2018. The cattle were unloaded at Hai Phong, Vietnam on 26 and 27 November 2018, making this a 19 day voyage.

The mortality rate for cattle was 0.22% (4 mortalities), which does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of the mortalities was not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations of, and has been approved by the Independent Observer (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

Livestock were generally loaded in accordance with the load plan. The stockperson adjusted the numbers of cattle in some pens over the first few days based on animal weight and the load plan. In most instances and more so per conditions, at least 80% of cattle were able to lie down at any given time.

Personnel

An experienced LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanied the voyage who had worked on livestock vessels for many years. The stockperson was committed to ensuring the welfare of the livestock and was diligent in monitoring the conditions experienced by the livestock, condition of the pens, feed and water and taking action when required in a timely manner. The master had a keen interest in the welfare of the livestock, feed, water supply and pen conditions. The bosun appeared to have knowledge and skills with livestock. There were eight livestock crew assisting the stockperson during the voyage and their role was to water, feed livestock, distribute sawdust bedding, inspecting livestock, assist with adjusting pen density and moving animals to the hospital pens for treatment or monitoring. The crew were competent in their duties although there were varying levels of livestock handling experience and the

stockperson was constantly monitoring the crew tasks to ensure satisfactory animal welfare outcomes.

Daily routine

A daily meeting was held every day at 10:30am and involved the Chief Officer (CO), stockperson, and the observer. At the meeting, mortalities, treatments, feed and water issues and instructions, and environmental conditions were discussed and recorded.

The stockperson commenced morning rounds of inspection at around 6:30am. The inspection evaluated animal health and welfare, feed and water supply and pen conditions. The afternoon inspection rounds commenced at around 3:30pm and was a repeat of the morning rounds. In addition to inspections, the stockperson treated any identified ill or injured cattle, adjust pen numbers and euthanised animals if required.

One night watch person was allocated each night. The night watch person duties included walking the decks, inspecting the livestock and request the stockpersons assistance if an issue was detected.

Feed and water

The cattle were fed some pellets in the pre-export holding premises and no issues were observed with feeding once on board the vessel. Feed and water was supplied within twelve hours of loading.

Livestock were fed usually from 6:00am until 7:30am and from 10:00 until 11:00am. The afternoon feeding was undertaken from 3:00pm until 5:00pm. Chaff was supplied every second day.

The feed and water troughs did get occasionally knocked off the railing resulting in feed/water spilling on the floor and requiring monitoring and topping up.

Drinking water was good quality. Water was supplied in plastic troughs alongside the feed troughs, and automatically filling nose bowls. The water troughs were emptied and cleaned out during the morning and afternoon crew rounds. Approximately 5 nose bowls were not operational or in poor condition and there were no spare parts for repairs. However all animals had good access to food and water troughs with the additional troughs provided.

Ventilation

The integrated forced ventilation system provided direct airflow through the pens via pipes aided by a series of extraction fans. No issues with ventilation during the voyage were noted.

The temperature readings were taken once per day before 10:00am for inclusion in the daily report. The maximum temperature recorded was 33°C dry bulb and 80% humidity.

Pen conditions

Decks 1, 2 and 3 were washed out on day 10 due to a build-up of manure. Deck 4 was in good condition on day 10. All decks were washed out on day 12. Sawdust was spread out on Deck 4 after the wash.

Sawdust was used as bedding for the heavy bulls, hospital pens and for remedial action if pens became wet.

Health and welfare

Due to a mechanical issue with the engine two days after departing Fremantle, the vessel was required to stop in Geraldton for two days for repairs. Feed and water was adequate during the voyage, with no interruption to livestock services.

Hospital pens were empty at the start of the voyage and were used to assist with the treatment of unwell cattle. Some healthy animals were transferred to the hospital pens on Decks 1 and 2 to create more room in some pens which appeared a little crowded. The stockperson advised that the animals would be transferred out if an injured or sick animal was found on those decks to enable treatment/monitoring in the designated hospital pens.

The stockperson was competent in humane euthanasia of animals and identifying and treating injured or unwell animals.

There were 4 mortalities on board the vessel during the voyage. The first was euthanised following a fractured leg. The cause of the second and third mortalities was undetermined. The final mortality was euthanised as the animal was unable to rise at the time of discharge.

A small number of cattle were treated for eye infections and lameness and were resolved by the time of discharge.

Discharge

No issues were noted during the discharge in Vietnam.

Conclusion

The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL)* requirements.

Overall, the observer noted that the management of the livestock and animal welfare standards on the vessel were consistent with the ASEL. The master, vessel officers, crew and stockpersons were all competent in performing their duties and worked well together to ensure the welfare of the livestock.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 5 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 5 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 7 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 11 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 14 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

