

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Swagman*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in November 2018

Report 43, August 2019

Voyage summary

The *Ocean Swagman* has seven decks. Four decks are enclosed and three are open, having railings as external barriers.

The *Ocean Swagman* commenced loading on 28 November 2018 and departed Fremantle Western Australia on 30 November 2018 with 4251 cattle for Vietnam. The first port of discharge was Thi Vai with the final discharge completed on 11 December at Long An. The voyage was 11 days in length, with the loading and discharge process taking three days.

The independent observer (observer) joined the vessel in Fremantle and remained on board until completion of discharge.

The overall mortality rate for cattle was 0.12% (five mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate as stated in the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)). The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure on behalf of the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the observer, from loading in Fremantle until discharge at the Port of Long An. The summary has been approved by the observer who accompanied this voyage.

Implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of livestock

Exporter documentation

The observer was provided with records of fodder and water consumption, temperature and humidity and the load plan.

Loading

No animal welfare issues were observed at loading. The personnel loading the vessel demonstrated effective animal handling practice. Cattle were separated into stock lines and type.

The ramps between decks were lined with sawdust to prevent slippage and so the livestock had a soft floor beneath their hoofs when descending or ascending the ramps. The pens themselves varied greatly in size and shape, however it was observed that in each case there was adequate space to access feed and water.

Personnel

There were two experienced LiveCorp Accredited Stock persons (stock persons) on board each having worked on over 60 live animal export voyages and both having extensive knowledge and experience of the land based cattle industry. They were responsible for managing the loading and unloading, coaching staff on animal handling techniques, administering treatments and the overall health and welfare of the cattle.

The Master was pivotal in the correct application of procedures and decisions related to maintaining animal welfare on the vessel.

The Chief Officer (CO) was responsible for gathering information and reporting on environmental conditions and feed and water intake. The CO was also responsible for equipment required to maintain and implement health and welfare procedures and communicating with the crew so that duties were undertaken correctly.

The Boson alerted the CO to any faults in water or feed delivery systems. He was responsible for allocated duties to the crew including arranging night watchmen duties, clearing corridors, feeding and watering.

Daily routine

Daily meetings were held at 10:00 am with the Master, CO, stock persons and Boson. The days average feed and water consumption calculations were discussed and the instructions for the next feeds.

Average and highest temperature and humidity records for each deck were calculated from record taken daily at 04:00 am, 08:00 am, 12:00 noon, 04:00 pm, 08:00 pm and 12:00 midnight.

Feed and watering was usually undertaken at 07:00 am, 10:30 am and 03:30 pm.

Feed and water

Pellets were supplied to each pen by a semi-automated system of augers, conveyors and gravity fed pipes. Each pen had sufficient troughs to allow all the cattle in the pen to access feed. The observer reported that sufficient feed was provided at suitable times so that that cattle had equitable access. Crew on each deck filled the troughs that were not supplied by the automated system. Chaff was supplied manually and mixed with the pellets in the trough.

Fresh drinking water was generated by reverse osmosis system. Water was pumped to each water trough via metal and plastic piping that controlled supply by float valve. The cattle were able to drink as much water as they needed.

Scrubbing of troughs with a brush and rinsing troughs was undertaken daily. Crew regularly scooped contaminants from the water.

There were no observations of cattle showing signs of thirst or stress due to lack of water.

Ventilation

Ventilation is supplied to all decks by fans drawing air from the top of the vessel. Air from the decks is extracted by exhaust fans. The three top open decks also receive ventilation from the open sides of the vessel and open doorways.

Cattle did seem to congregating near fans however no record of heat stress symptoms were made by the observer on the voyage.

Pen conditions

Water leaks had some effect on the pad however these problems were isolated and fixed.

Pad conditions on open decks varied from dry to boggy. The enclosed decks were mainly muddy, seldom appearing boggy. Sawdust application was successful in managing the wetter pads, especially at the aft of deck 5.

A wash down of all enclosed decks occurred on 6 December and fresh sawdust applied.

Health and welfare

Companion cattle were moved into hospital pens to assist with recovery. Water was placed in the pens so they were not required to compete or stand up. Veterinary therapeutics including antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, steroids and sedatives were administered as required by the stock people.

Of the five mortalities, all were being treated, four were suspected pneumonia cases and one was a downer that was euthanised. Four were examined post-mortem and the suspected pneumonia cases showed dark colouration of lung tissue however the diagnosis was not always conclusive.

The euthanised animal was dealt with humanely, stunned and then immediately bled out.

Discharge

The observer determined that on average the cattle maintained their loading weight.

Personnel assisting with discharge were successfully coached by the stock persons on the cattle management techniques required.

Other

The vessel encountered very rough sea conditions on the first night of the voyage. There was some repairs required to the fodder system however the observer did not report any adverse welfare outcomes as a result of the sea conditions.

Conclusion

The observer found the exporters voyage instructions that requires livestock be managed in accordance with ASEL were followed. Any problems were addressed without delay and the cattle treated and managed appropriately.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 5 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 9 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 9 hospital in pen—no issues identified



Day 11 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 12 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 13 cattle in pen—no issues identified

