

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Rahmeh*

Cattle exported to China in December 2018

Report 44, August 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 6,376 cattle was loaded onto the MV *Rahmeh* in Portland, Victoria between 3 and 5 December 2018. The livestock were discharged at Port Huanghua, China on 25 and 26 December 2018, making this a journey of 24 days.

The independent observer (observer) joined the vessel in Portland and remained on voyage until discharge was completed.

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.09% (six mortalities). The mortality rate 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 by the exporter.

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

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 and contingencies. The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.

Loading

The cattle were loaded with minimal slipping and stress. Ramps used for loading were suitable. Sawdust was used to minimise risk of slipping. No significant injuries to the cattle were observed.

The vessel was loaded according to the load plan and ASEL stocking density requirements. Adjustments were made to the number of cattle in some pens to provide more space and access more feed and water troughs. After adjustments, at least 50% of cattle could lie down in each pen. In some pens, all cattle could lay down at once.

Personnel

An Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) accompanied the voyage. The AAV was responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of

the livestock throughout the voyage, until completion of discharge. In addition to the AAV, two experienced stockpersons were on board. The stockpersons and the AAV were very competent at handling livestock and had welfare of the cattle as a priority.

The Master had overall responsibility for the vessel, personnel and cargo. The Chief Officer (CO) was responsible for managing the crew, daily reporting and condition of the holds and welfare of the livestock. The CO engaged well with the AAV and stockpersons. The bosun reported to the CO and was the crew's immediate supervisor.

A total of seventeen crew cared for the livestock in addition to the stockpersons and AAV. The crew were responsible for feeding and watering the cattle, cleaning troughs, aisles and pens. The crew were experienced and completed their duties to an acceptable standard.

Daily routine

Meetings were held each morning at 10:00am with the AAV, two stockpersons, CO and the observer. Issues discussed included husbandry, deck washing and feeding. The CO relayed instructions to the bosun to be carried out by the crew.

The AAV and stockpersons inspected, treated and moved cattle to hospital pens commencing at around 6:30am and 3:00pm taking two to three hours each time. The crew were competent at identifying issues and relaying the issue to the AAV or stockperson.

Two night watch persons were on duty every night. Their main task was to monitor water supply and to note any issues for the next day.

Feed and water

The crews routinely commenced the first round of feeding, watering and cleaning duties at 7:00am and the second round at 1:00pm.

The vessel has an automated feeding system comprising gravity fed pellets to decks and manual switches to pump fodder to troughs. Chaff and hay were fed daily and used extensively in hospital pens or for shy feeders. Ample fodder was available for the voyage with some reserves. Provision of clean water and cleaning of the water troughs was high standard. Any dry water troughs were attended to in a timely manner.

Overall, the provision of feed and water to the cattle was at a high standard.

Ventilation

All decks were adequately ventilated. At times, the conditions varied between decks but were never oppressive. Radiated heat from the engine room on middle decks was noticeable but not excessive.

Temperatures were recorded at 11:30am each day. Maximum temperatures recorded were around 32°C dry bulb, 31°C wet bulb and around 93% humidity.

Pen conditions

All pens and decks were washed on three occasions during the voyage. Additional specific deck washes were completed as required. The crew were proactive in managing pen conditions using wash down, shovelling excessive pad away and using sawdust.

Health and welfare

The AAV and stockpersons were pro-active in treating sick and injured cattle for a variety of conditions. Some animals were treated in their pen and others were moved to hospital pens. Hospital pens were used effectively for managing sick or thin cattle.

There were six mortalities during the voyage. Of the six mortalities, three were subject to a post mortem inspection by the AAV. The causes of death were attributed to pneumonia, peritonitis and septicaemia. Other causes of death included unresponsive recumbency or injury.

Discharge

The cattle were discharged with minimal slipping or stress. Ramps used for discharge were suitable. Sawdust was used to minimise risk of slipping. No significant injuries to the cattle were observed.

Conclusion

The cattle were provided with an appropriate level of care during the voyage. Animal welfare was of highest concern for the AAV, stockpersons, CO, bosun and crew.

Identifying and treating sick or injured animals was done in a timely manner.

Feed and water and access was of a high standard. Ventilation was adequate. The handling of animals during loading, during the voyage and discharge was very professional. The observer noted the daily reporting was consistent with the actual circumstances during the voyage.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Cattle in pen — no issues identified



Day 5 Cattle in pen — no issues identified



Day 8 Cattle in pen — no issues identified



Day 10 Cattle in pen — no issues identified



Day 14 Cattle in pen — no issues identified



Day 19 Cattle in pen — no issues identified

