Independent Observer summary report on MV *Dareen*

Cattle exported to Vietnam in December 2018

Report 51, October 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 4,265 cattle was loaded onto the MV *Dareen* in Townsville on 12 December 2018. The vessel departed in the early morning of 13 December 2018. The MV *Dareen* completed discharge of cattle at Hai Phong, Vietnam on 25 December 2018, making this a 14 day voyage, with loading and discharge taking four days.

The mortality rate for cattle was 0.82% (35 mortalities).The mortality rate does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. 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 and has been approved by the independent observer (observer) that 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. 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.

Loading

Sufficient competent personnel were available at loading to ensure the livestock husbandry and welfare needs were addressed. Livestock were handled and loaded in a manner which prevented injury and minimised stress.

The exporter prepared a load plan in accordance with the requirements. During the voyage, the stockperson supervised adjustments made to pen stocking density to facilitate cattle comfort and compliance with ASEL. At least 50% of cattle could lie down in the pens at any one time.

Personnel

An experienced LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanied the voyage and was responsible for the health and welfare of the livestock. The stockperson was experienced with handling of livestock on export vessels. The master, Chief Officer (CO), bosun and the stockperson demonstrated competency regarding the health and welfare of the livestock. There was a genuine interest in the feeding, watering and general wellbeing of the cattle.

The CO assumed responsibility for the daily managing of the husbandry, crew and, along with the bosun, liaised with the stockperson.

Daily routine

A daily meeting was held at 11:00am and involved the master, CO, stockperson and the observer. The discussions covered the health and welfare of cattle, condition of the manure pads, number of animals unable to rise (otherwise known as downers), mortalities, treatments and illnesses.

The stockperson commenced duties at 7:00am with inspections, evaluation of previously treated cattle, checking feed and water quality and supply and assessment of pad conditions. The stockperson would follow the same routine in the afternoon session beginning at approximately 1:30pm.

Two members were assigned to night shift duties on a rotational basis between the hours of 9:00pm and 6:00am. The duties included checking fodder troughs, water troughs and checking the welfare of the cattle. The crew were instructed to inform the stockperson if any urgent animal welfare issues were detected at any time of day.

Feed and water

Feeding was accompanied by the cleaning and emptying of water troughs. The morning feeding of pellets commenced at 7:00am. Chaff was fed at 10:30am each day. Afternoon feeding, watering and cleaning was undertaken around 3:00pm. Feeding was accompanied by the cleaning and emptying of water troughs to facilitate availability of drinking water.

The reverse osmosis plants provided ample water for cattle to consume. Occasionally, water troughs were temporarily unavailable because of routine water trough cleaning or maintenance to clear a blocked float valve mechanism. The water was unavailable for less than 30 minutes and the cattle did not rush to drink when the water became available again.

Ventilation

The ventilation system was operational and effective at all times during the voyage. Three days into the voyage, extra ventilation was provided to the lower decks. Early in the voyage, the cattle on the upper decks appeared to be more comfortable with the ventilation, temperature and relatively humidity.

The dry and wet bulb temperature was taken daily on each deck at 11:00am. The respiratory character of the cattle on every day of the voyage was normal.

Pen conditions

During the early stages, on some decks, the manure pads became boggy. The stockperson used leftover, unpalatable fodder to assist with drying the pad. The strategy was successful and the pad became drier. As a result of the build-up of the manure pad, the pens were washed down on day 6 and 7. At the end of the voyage, the pads were dry with notable build up.

On two occasions, a rain squall wet the pads in the outer corner of the upper decks. The rain did not adversely affect the cattle but the pads became boggy. Waste fodder was added to the pad to provide a remedial action.

Health and welfare

The cattle were regularly inspected to enable timely identification and treatment of sick animals.

Hospital pens were empty at the start of the voyage.

The majority of the cattle which became ill and required treatment were not moved to the hospital pens because they were downers. To facilitate isolation and treatments, the downers were left in the original pen and the companion animals were moved to an adjacent pen. The increased frequency of movements to adjacent pens caused some increased level of disruption and their rest time was more often disturbed.

Seven cattle were identified as downers on day two. From day two until day nine of the voyage, the number of cattle being treated as downers ranged from five to thirteen each day. The success rate for the treatment of downers was mixed during the voyage. Unwell cattle that were not responding to treatments were humanely euthanised. Euthanasia was undertaken by the stockperson. On several occasions, more than one shot of the captive bolt was required for death, noting that the first shot always rendered the animal unconscious.

The respiratory character and faeces of the cattle on every day of the voyage was normal.

Thirty-five mortalities were recorded on the voyage. The cause of the mortalities was not definitively established.

Discharge

Adequate feed and water was supplied during discharge. Animal welfare, infrastructure and handlers were a satisfactory standard.

Conclusion

The stockperson provided appropriate care and management of the livestock on board the voyage. The cattle were systematically and regularly inspected. Any cattle identified as requiring treatment was undertaken in a timely manner.

The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements, including all areas of vessel preparation, loading and on-board management.

Downer cattle were identified and treated from day 2 onwards. Some cattle recovered but others did not recover.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Cattle in pen — no issues identified

Day 4 Cattle in pen — no issues identified

Day 6 Cattle in pen — no issues identified

Day 7 Cattle in pen — no issues identified

Day 11 Cattle in pen — no issues identified

Day 12 Cattle in pen — lower stocking density