

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Yangtze Fortune*

Cattle exported to China in December 2018

Report 59, September 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 2,405 cattle were loaded onto the *MV Yangtze Fortune* at Portland on 30 and 31 December 2018. The vessel departed in the morning of the 31 December 2018. The vessel discharged cattle at the Port of Rongcheng, China on 17 and 18 January 2019, making this a 20 day voyage.

An Independent Observer (observer) boarded the vessel in Portland and remained on board until discharge.

The mortality rate for cattle was 0.37% (nine 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 from the observer. 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.

Loading

The cattle were loaded close to the load plan. The observer noted adjustments made during the voyage so the cattle overall had more space. During the voyage, the observer noted that most pens could be seen to have all of the stock lying down. All hospital pens were empty at the start of the voyage.

Personnel

An Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) was present on the voyage. The AAV was experienced in accompanying livestock export voyages. The LiveCorp Accredited Stock person (stockperson) accompanying the cattle was capable and consulted the AAV on issues when required.

The master is a very experienced captain and showed a real interest in the conditions on the decks. There were 22 crew including the bosun and night watchperson that were caring for the cattle.

Daily routine

The AAV and stockperson performed rounds in the morning that involved checking stock and followed by administering any treatments required. The checking and treatment process was repeated in the afternoon with the addition of performing post mortems when needed.

There were 22 crew members, whose tasks were feeding, watering, cleaning floors, washing decks and tending to the cattle.

A meeting was held every day at 10.00am and involved the master, Chief Officer (CO), AAV, stockperson and the observer to discuss the cattle condition, feed and water consumption, deck washing, treatments, mortalities and other issues arising since the previous day.

Night watch duties included walking the decks checking for broken water lines, checking for sick cattle and attending to any other issues as they arose.

Feed and water

Feed on the vessel was conveyed by belts and augers from the forward holding tanks to chutes on each deck. The crew then physically moved feed from the chutes into feed troughs twice daily. On average, there were two feed troughs and two water troughs per pen. Feed was provided in pellet form and the finely ground pellets were cleaned from the feed troughs at each feed cycle. Chaff was fed on most days at a rate of 1.2 kilograms per head.

The observer noted that cattle knocking the feed troughs off the pen rails was an issue for calculating the daily fodder consumption. Adjustments were made to the troughs to prevent the problem this issue reoccurring, however, a small number of troughs were pushed off the rails on most days. However, the observer noted that there was no adverse animal health or welfare impact from the troughs being knocked off the rails.

The reverse osmosis plants provided water for cattle consumption. The quality of the water was clean and checked by the CO during his rounds. Water troughs were well secured to pen railings and were cleaned twice daily.

There was adequate room for the cattle to manoeuvre around the pens to access feed and water and overcrowding and herd hierarchy were not problems.

Leaks from the water trough hoses and feed troughs being knocked off pen rails were ongoing maintenance issues for the crew.

Ventilation

The ventilation system consists of a series of 8 fans with fresh air transported by pipes directing air into the pens of cattle. Eight extraction fans remove stale air out of each deck. No issues were detected with the ventilation system for all times during the voyage.

Pen conditions

Deck washing was undertaken on day 9 and 10, and again on day 14 and 15. The first deck wash resulted in a blocked drain on Deck 1 which caused the some pens to become flooded. Sawdust was spread in the pens after washing to assist with drying pens.

The water trough hoses were connected to the side of the troughs by a click on connection similar to a garden hose to tap connection. During the voyage some cattle were able to chew or push on these exposed plastic hoses to cause a breakage which resulted in some pens becoming wet. The crew were aware of this issue and would clean and dry the pen using sawdust. Otherwise the pen pad conditions were considered good throughout the voyage.

Health and welfare

The weather conditions varied from 20°C when departing Portland to a maximum of 32°C with 79% humidity at the Equator then falling to negative 10°C on arrival in Rongcheng, China. Seas were moderate except for when the vessel approached tropical cyclone Penny on the east coast of Australia. Sea of up to four meter seas were encountered for 3 days. The voyage length was extended by two days as a result of the adverse sea conditions.

No signs of heat stress were detected with the favourable weather conditions and northern winter after crossing the Equator.

A significant number of cattle were treated (over 500 treatments were administered) on the voyage with treatments administered mainly for lameness, respiratory disease and ocular disease. The AAV noted that rough sea conditions caused by the proximity of the cyclone for 3 days during the voyage contributed to the lameness issue. The cause of mortalities were mainly pneumonia and complications resulting from lameness.

Discharge

The unloading of the cattle occurred without any issues.

Conclusion

The observer noted that overall the voyage went well with no major animal health and welfare issues to report.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Cattle resting in pen – no issues identified



Day 8 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 12 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 14 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 17 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

