Independent Observer summary report on MV *Awassi Express*

Cattle exported to Indonesia and Malaysia in May 2018

Report 6, December 2018

Voyage summary

The MV *Awassi Express* was operated as a container carrier and then converted to carry livestock. The *Awassi Express* has subsequently been renamed to the MV *Anna Marra* on 1 November 2018.

This voyage carried one consignment for one exporter and comprised 11,160 cattle. Loading commenced in Broome on 10 May 2018, with the vessel departing on 11 May 2018. The cattle were discharged at three ports: Panjang and Jakarta, Indonesia, and Pasir Gudang, Malaysia. Discharge was completed on 23 May 2018, making this a 14-day voyage.

An independent observer (IO) was on board the vessel for the duration of the voyage.

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.03 per cent (three 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 by the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the IO from loading in Broome until discharge in Pasir Gudang, Malaysia. The summary has been approved by the IO who accompanied this voyage.

Implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of livestock

Exporter documentation

Consignment-specific export plans (CSEPs) were available to address procedures relating to provision of fodder, water, bedding (cattle only) medication, humane destruction, livestock officer instructions from loading through to discharge and contingencies. The instructions included in the CSEPs were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.

Loading

The IO noted that non-slip grating is used to combat the risk of slipping during loading and discharge, and was deemed effective by the IO. The loading process is efficient, however one animal broke its leg while being moved into their pen on the vessel. The IO did not observe the incident, however was advised the animal was euthanised immediately.

The load plan was used as a guide by the LiveCorp Accredited stockpersons (stock people) accompanying the voyage, however alterations were made during the loading process considering vessel layout knowledge and likely discharge scenarios.

The IO noted that the vessel was clean and in generally good condition prior to sailing.

Personnel

The vessel had a total of 67 personnel on board. This included 17 animal husbandry crew, two LiveCorp Accredited stockpeople, and one Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV). The IO's impression was the crew show a high level of skill and were dedicated to the welfare of the animals. They worked calmly around the cattle and were open to receiving guidance. Educational videos on animal welfare are played for the crew during the voyage.

The IO noted the stock people and the AAV displayed experience and attention to detail. Sick animals were detected early from subtle signs and attended to in a timely manner. Hospital pens were usually located in high traffic areas, so were frequently observed. The cattle exhibited few stress indicators.

Daily routine

A meeting was held at 10.00am every day and involved the Master, Chief Officer (CO), AAV and both stock people. The Bosun would attend, depending on availability of other officers.

Two wet and dry bulb thermometers were located on each deck, with measurements taken every four hours. An average of the two readings on each deck was calculated and recorded by the CO who then calculated relative humidity. The IO confirmed that all spot checks performed confirmed the accuracy of the recorded values. The greatest variation noted between the stocked decks at a particular time was three degrees Celsius dry temperature and 24 per cent humidity.

Feed and water

Feeding troughs were prone to being knocked off the rails by the animals, however the issue was managed by tying the troughs down to the rails on day one. The IO mentioned that the fodder was of high quality and sufficient quantity was loaded to feed ad lib for the entirety of the voyage. Bagged chaff was used to assist shy feeders to increase their consumption. The IO considered the trough space adequate in all pens with no undue jostling noted.

Pens had a combination of fixed/mobile automatic water troughs and/or mobile troughs which were manually filled with water. Access to water was considered sufficient, and similarly to the feed troughs, no jostling was observed or indication of prolonged thirst. Hose connections were prone to small leaks, however this did not affect water availability to the animals. The IO explained on the first night, not all the fixed automatic water troughs were turned on and, when this did occur, the first part of the water was rust coloured. Additionally, the mobile troughs were not tied down yet and some were subsequently knocked off as the cattle were still settling. Night staff would systematically rectify this, and therefore still complied with ASEL requirements. Overall water management was considered satisfactory.

Ventilation

The ventilation system functioned normally during the voyage. It was common to leave the two forward and two aft doors on each upper deck open to provide through ventilation. The ventilation system functioned consistently and air quality was acceptable. Cattle did not exhibit signs of heat stress.

Pen conditions

While the amount of sawdust loaded with the vessel complied with ASEL requirements, it was not routinely used due to limited supplies. Small leaks in the hoses to the water troughs need to be continually addressed throughout the voyage. On two occasions, major leaks occurred overnight resulting in localised flooding. Cattle were effectively managed, with the crew moving them in to alternative pens and saw dust used to absorb residual moisture.

Pad conditions varied from dry and crusty, to moist and boggy throughout the journey, however this was not seen as problematic by the IO. Decks were washed once on day nine. Effort was also made to clean the legs and feet of the cattle. Although some animals reacted to the water pressure by moving or kicking, it did not appear to cause distress.

Health and welfare

All classes quickly settled to eating and drinking well after loading. No heat stress was noted. Some cattle were observed panting, especially when lying down. This stopped when they stood up, and they did not appear distressed. No pregnancies were identified. The IO noted that the most stressful situation observed was animals getting their heads stuck in the pen bars. While they could sometimes be freed immediately by the first crew member to observe this, on some occasions, freeing took some time and required multiple crew members. Additionally, sometimes the stock people or AAV were awoken to assist. However, no ongoing injury was noted in any affected cattle.

Discharge

Discharge occurred at three ports and took longer than loading, as each truck carried between eight to thirty cattle each. The vessel was well prepared for discharge, and the process well managed and without animals being held in holding pens for undue amounts of time.

Conclusion

The observer determined that the relevant procedures relating to the management of livestock exported by sea were consistent with ASEL and good animal welfare outcomes for the cattle being transported.

Mortality rates reported were accurate. The crew displayed a knowledge of and dedication to animal welfare that appears genuine and consistent. Their attentiveness and dynamic modification of processes with the aim of maximising animal health appeared to be an ingrained habit.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 4 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 5 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 7 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 9 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 12 Cattle in pen—no issues identified