

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Swagman*

Cattle exported to Oman and UAE in January 2019

Report 69, September 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 3,470 cattle were loaded onto the *MV Ocean Swagman* at Portland on 20 January 2019. The vessel departed on the evening of 20 January 2019. The first discharge was at the port of Sohar, Oman on 7 and 8 February 2019. The second discharge was at the port of Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates on 9 and 10 February 2019, making this a 22 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.09% (3 mortalities). This 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 this 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 Heat Stress Risk Assessment (HSRA) and load plan were submitted to the Department of Agriculture prior to departure as required. Load plan calculations are based on the average weight of each breed/type being allocated to a particular deck and area based on the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* (ASEL).

Loading

The vessel was loaded to provide 27% increased space allocation to the cattle above the ASEL requirements resulting in large amounts of room for the livestock at all times. There was no non-compliant handling observed during loading.

Personnel

The master and the Chief Officer (CO) were highly effective and cooperative. The master walked the decks once daily in the afternoon. The CO walked the decks at least once daily.

Personnel included a very experienced Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV), an experienced LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) and an additional stockperson. The crew were experienced, capable and receptive to instruction from the bosun and CO. The overall handling of the livestock was efficient and professional.

Daily routine

The AAV commenced walking the decks around 6:00am and during the day administered treatments, performed post mortem and general cattle management tasks until around 6:30pm each day. The stockpersons commenced around 7:00am and worked hard with similar timeframes throughout the day with the AAV and crew. The first shift of the livestock crew commenced at 6:00am and the last shift finished at around 5:00pm.

A meeting was held every day at 10:00am and was attended by the AAV, master, CO, bosun and observer. Issues discussed included climatic conditions, washing of decks, feeding regime of pellets and chaff, remaining fodder, use of bedding, water consumption, scheduled arrival at ports, treatments, management of cattle with udder development

A single night watch crew member checked all decks once an hour from 8:00pm until 5:00am.

Feed and water

The vessel has a gravity fed system with some troughs that are manually filled. The cattle were fed two to three times per day after instructions from the head stockperson.

The feeding program was well administered with the daily feed consumption closer to 3% of bodyweight rather than the ASEL required 2.5% rate. The cattle were not fed pellets before loading and took some time to become accustomed to the pellets. In addition to the pellets, supplementary chaff was provided daily at variable amounts.

Water troughs were emptied and cleaned as the first task in the morning with a second clean usually completed during the day. The water troughs were automatic with a float and tap system. Water was consistently available and never an issue during the voyage. The vessel had 2000 tonne of drinking water in reserve at all times.

Ventilation

The vessel has three open upper decks and four fully enclosed decks. The ventilation on the vessel was very good overall. However, one intake tower is close to the engine room doors and can result in hot air intake especially when the vessel has a tail wind. However, during this voyage the temperatures experienced were comfortable.

Temperature was recorded twice daily at mid-morning and mid-afternoon using wall mounted thermometers on each deck and averaged. The observer noted that the averaging of the two temperature recordings resulted in a reduction of around 1°C of the highest temperature daily on each deck.

Pen conditions

The decks were washed multiple times over the course of the voyage. Washing started on days 6 and 7. The standard routine was to wash the upper decks on one day and lower decks the next

day. The system worked well and cleaning was thorough. Sawdust was spread after washing of decks.

Health and welfare

The seas on the first two days of the voyage were calm, but rough conditions were experienced when rounding Cape Leeuwin around day three and four. Once rounded, flat seas and comfortable temperatures were experienced.

The observer was advised that the cattle had not been introduced to pellets prior to departure. The observer noted that it took some time for the cattle to adjust to their new food supply. By day five, the cattle were consuming the pellets normally and they spent most of their time eating or sitting comfortably and ruminating.

Cattle were treated for eye infections, horn infections, lameness, ill-thrift and respiratory disease during the voyage. The number of cattle in the hospital pens varied from day to day but most of the hospital cases were for management of cattle with developing udders. There were no signs of heat stress or increased respiratory rate due to high temperature on the voyage.

Some cattle appeared in a more advanced state of pregnancy than expected due to udder development. The cattle identified as possibly in a later stage of pregnancy were managed with an amended feeding regime based mainly on chaff. Other than one aborted calf, no calves were born.

Discharge

The discharge proceeded with no issues. The discharge in Oman was quick and efficient. Discharge in UAE was slower due to truck round trip issues.

Conclusion

The climatic conditions were very good for transporting cattle with no observations of heat related problems. The health and husbandry of the livestock was very well managed by a diligent AAV, stockpersons and vessel's crew. The cattle appeared to gain weight during the voyage. There was no non-compliant handling observed during loading, the voyage or discharge.

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

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 4 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 10 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 13 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 16 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 19 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

