



Australian Government

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Aurochs*

Cattle and buffalo exported to Indonesia and Malaysia in September 2022

May 2023

Voyage summary

Livestock: 1,063 cattle and 621 buffalo

Vessel: *MV Aurochs*

Loading location and date: Darwin, 25 to 26 September 2022

Vessel departure location and date: Darwin, 26 September 2022

Discharge location and dates:

- Belawan, Indonesia, from 4 to 5 October 2022
- Pasir Gudang, Malaysia, on 7 October 2022

Voyage length: 13 days

Independent Observer (observer): Boarded at Darwin and remained onboard until completion of discharge.

Voyage mortality rate: There were no mortalities for cattle and buffalo.

Notifiable mortality rate required to trigger a mortality investigation: 0.5% or 3 animals (whichever is greater).

Summary of observations

This report summarises key observations of the implementation and effectiveness of exporter arrangements to ensure the health and welfare of livestock. The report has been approved by the observer who accompanied the voyage.

Exporter documentation

Based on observations made during this voyage, no issues impacting animal health and welfare were identified relating to exporter documentation.

Loading

The observer noted that:

- 1) The load plan overstocked pens across the vessel's enclosed decks and did not give additional space for horned livestock as per the exporter's arrangements. The observer sampled pens across the enclosed decks and identified overstocking on Decks C, D and E. 5 pens on Deck C were overstocked by one animal per pen, 15 pens on Deck D were overstocked by a total of 44 animals and 5 pens on Deck E were overstocked by one animal per pen. The stockperson and crew were observed reshuffling livestock over the first few days of the voyage to ease spacing for cattle, which included penning livestock in unoccupied hospital pens. No adverse animal health or welfare effects were observed as a result of the overstocking.
- 2) The load plan did not separate species with laneways or barriers as required by ASEL standard 5.1.1. Although most pens separated species with solid barriers, some buffalo pens were observed to adjoin cattle pens, without any solid barrier. No adverse animal health or welfare effects were observed as a direct result of not separating the species.
- 3) Cattle were loaded with horn tips thinner than the minimum 3cm diameter as per the exporter's arrangements. No adverse effects on animal health and welfare were observed as a result of the thin-tipped horns.
- 4) Some horned buffalo were loaded with unhealed tipping wounds, in contravention of ASEL standard 1.1.5. Scabs were observed to have been knocked off during the voyage, causing horns to bleed. Two buffalo were observed to have infected dehorning wounds. These livestock were not observed to be treated and the stockperson did not report any treatments of infected or bleeding horns.
- 5) A section of the loading/discharge ramp walls was damaged and had the potential to injure livestock. No adverse animal health or welfare effects were observed at discharge as a direct result of the damaged ramp wall.

Personnel

Based on observations made during this voyage, no issues impacting animal health and welfare were identified relating to personnel.

Daily routine

Based on observations made during this voyage, no issues impacting animal health and welfare were identified relating to daily routine.

Feed and water

The observer noted that:

- 1) The pens were configured with a combination of nose bowls and at least one water trough.
 - a) Cattle and buffalo were observed to drink only from manually filled water troughs, and appeared unaccustomed to using the nose bowls.
 - b) The stockperson and crew were observed to be manually filling all water troughs regularly, however in some pens livestock drank water at a faster rate than it could be replenished so that water troughs were temporarily empty.

- c) Nose bowls were not cleaned regularly and were frequently fouled with faeces and urine.
- d) Water troughs were occasionally fouled, however any trough contamination was quickly cleaned by the stockperson and crew
- e) As the livestock settled during the days following loading, their water consumption increased. The observer noted on Day 6 that numerous water troughs were empty and occasionally dry. On Day 7 the stockperson added a trough to some pens, which was observed to be effective in improving water availability for the cattle. Later in the voyage, some pens were reconfigured back to their original set-up and on Day 8, one pen was regularly observed to have no water in its trough.
- f) No adverse animal health effects were observed as a direct result of livestock not using the nose bowls or of the periodically empty water troughs.

Ventilation

Based on observations made during this voyage, no issues impacting animal health and welfare were identified relating to ventilation.

Pen conditions

The observer noted that:

- 1) Drains were observed to drip water into 2 pens on Deck B throughout the voyage, regularly wetting the pad. The pens experienced heavy waterlogging on Day 6 due to rain ingress from the top deck and sawdust was applied to manage the pad condition effectively. These pens were observed in notably poorer condition and were fully shovelled out on Day 8, improving conditions for cattle. No adverse effects on animal health were observed as a result of the wet pads.
- 2) Sawdust was provided in walkways during loading to minimise slippage as required under ASEL. Unabsorbed faeces on pen floors caused a slipping hazard to unsettled cattle and buffalo at the beginning of the voyage. No bedding material was added to reduce the risk of slippage, however manure pads formed and dried out within 48 hours so that pen conditions improved for animals. No adverse effects on animal health and welfare were observed as a result of slippery pen floors.
- 3) Some gates had been removed between pens, leaving exposed hinges. This did not lead to any observed animal health and welfare issues.

Health and welfare

The observer noted that:

- 1) No mortalities occurred on this voyage.
- 2) During the voyage, the stockperson reported no treatments for buffalo. 16 cattle were treated for conditions including respiratory disease and lameness.

Discharge

Based on observations made during this voyage, no issues impacting animal health and welfare were identified relating to discharge.

Department actions

- 1) The department required the exporter to review, amend and vary as required, their processes for the management of:
 - a) Separation of livestock with different health status
 - b) Stocking density
 - c) Access to water for livestock unaccustomed to nose bowls
 - d) Application of bedding in pens with heavy cattle.

Representative photographs of voyage

Day 2 Cattle in pen — no issues identified



Day 4 Buffalo in pen — no issues identified



Day 6 Buffalo in pen — unhealed horns



Day 8 Cattle in pen — no issues identified



Day 10 Cattle in pen — no issues identified



Day 12 Buffalo in pen — no issues identified



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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