

MV Novantes Voyage 83 Mortality Investigation

Summary of Findings & Recommendations

The MV Novantes loaded 1169 head of cattle at Darwin East arm harbour on 8.2.02 for export to Jakarta, Indonesia. At completion of the voyage 99 head had died, 8.47% of the consignment. As a result of the high mortality rate, an investigation was instigated to determine the probable causes and to provide information for further remedial action if required.

The findings of this investigation provide strong evidence that the conditions in which the MV Novantes put out in on route to Jakarta directly impacted on the health and welfare of animals on this voyage. The trauma, feed deprivation and exposure that resulted from the ship movement and weather conditions during the first few days of the voyage is likely to have caused metabolic and physical stress and directly contributed to mortalities of a number of stock. The investigation however was unable to preclude the following factors as contributing to the overall mortality rate

- the prior physical condition of a proportion of the consignment being inadequate to handle extreme sailing conditions
- feed deprivation prior to entry into the feedlot, a shortened period of feed adoption, and feed rationing onboard reducing the ability of some animals to withstand the metabolic stress experienced on the voyage
- the development of septicaemia or toxemia in a number of animals as result of tissue necrosis due to bruising or faecal contamination of wounds during the latter part of the voyage

Important findings in terms of documentation of the export process and mortality reporting include:

- Anomalies in the declaration of the number, sex and POO of cattle loaded on the vessel.
- Anomalies in the reporting of details of mortalities on the ship mortality certificate.
- Lack of verifiable, accurate and detailed information made available during the mortality event to assist in the investigation and to assist the Department if necessary in the preparation of a government response to the event.

A number of recommendations have been made in relation to the findings in this report. The recommendations have been directed towards specific weaknesses or failures detected during the investigation and have been provided in more detail in the body of the report. The most significant recommendations relate to the recording and reporting of mortality events, the provision of export health certification on the basis of complete and verifiable documentation and declarations, and the development of sound training practices and documented procedures for activities and decision making processes undertaken by those people responsible for the welfare of the animals once loaded.