

Ice-class feederships keeping premium with outlook 'firm'

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The ice-class premium seems to be well and truly kicking in for feeder containerships.

German owner Reederei Hamburger Lloyd (RHL) is in the process of fixing four of its 1,600-teu ice-class vessels at a significant premium.

The 1,600-teu *Barmbek*, *Flottbek*, *Reinbek* and *Eilbek* (all built 2005) are set to go for six months to an unidentified charterer at around EUR 9,500 (\$12,400) per day.

That marks a premium of \$3,000 per day on regular fixtures. For example, the 1,646-teu *Fresena* (built 1997) was taken by Maersk Line for three months' trading to West Africa at just \$8,350 per day.

Brokers expect fixtures for ice-class vessels to remain firm, with the latest on a par with those a few weeks earlier — such as the EUR

9,500 per day achieved by the 1,404-teu *Charlotta* (built 2008) with CMA CGM.

Ice-class and small feederships of 1,100 teu (*see story, above left*) are the only ones to buck a falling charter market, which has seen rates in all sizes tumble since September.

Some owners remain unrealistic in their charter expectations, brokers add.

The four RHL ships had been on charter to Mediterranean Shipping Co (MSC) but brokers suggest the operator was not willing to pay the ice-class premium and will lose the ships between now and February.

MSC has had them on charter over the past 18 months at rock-bottom rates of between \$4,500 per day and \$5,000 per day.

The RHL quartet are the largest of a number of ice-class vessels to have been fixed in recent weeks.

In the smaller sizes, most vessels have been taken by Unifeeder.

The Danish operator has taken at least six ice-class 1A feederships from German owners.

These include the 868-teu hatchless ship *Aurora* (built 2001), extended for a couple of months at \$8,000 per day, and 962-teu *Aldebaran J* (built 2006), fixed from Jungerhans at EUR 3,800 (\$5,066) per day for six months.

It is also said to have taken the 803-teu *Jork Reliance* (built 2007), *Jork Ruler* (built 2006), 809-teu *Hanse Vision* and *Hanse Spirit*

(both built 2004) for four months at a lower rate of \$5,550 per day.

Unifeeder is the largest operator of feederships in the Baltic with around 40 ice-class vessels up to 1,500 teu.

However, other Continental and Baltic operators have also been active for the ice-season, including Delphis, which took the 974-teu *Jana* (built 2009) for three months at EUR 3,850 per day, and Finish operator Containerships, which grabbed the 804-teu *Jork Ranger* (built 2005) on option for four months at EUR 4,500 per day.



FIXED: Reederei Hamburger Lloyd's "Eilbek"

Photo: RHL