



Dr Mark Schipp
Department of Agriculture
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Cc Mr Phillip Glyde, Dr Julia Nicholls

by email: info@vale.org.au

14 December 2014

Re: Correspondence from 23rd October 2014 regarding High Mortality Voyage 46

Dear Dr Schipp,

Thank you for taking the time to investigate our concerns and provide such a detailed response to VALE. We really appreciate both but taken point by point, we would like to comment further:

- 1) that the Department of Agriculture concluded that the main cause of mortalities for this voyage was heat stress due to an extreme weather event is a cause of grave concern given the weather conditions reported on the day, historical voyage and meteorological data and existing publications of heat stress that detail which sheep are most likely to be affected by heat stress (Foster 2014, Caulfield et al 2013, Ferguson and Fisher 2008, McCarthy 2005). All available data on this topic indicate that when a heat “crash” occurs, it predominantly affects the animals on the open decks with no mechanical ventilation. That this did not occur, in addition to the lack of heat stress recorded in the cattle on the same ship, indicates that the Department’s conclusions have not relied on appropriate science or prior industry reports on this topic.
- 2) VALE does not accept that an experienced AAV would not know that 2% mortality was exceeded when over 4000 sheep died on a single day (on top of routine losses). The daily voyage reports do not have any record of a high mortality incident at all. It is not until 11.9.2013 that the AAV records that the mortality for the Fremantle sheep may exceed 2% and there is no record of any high (or even potentially high) mortality incident on the Adelaide daily voyage reports, something in itself that would likely contravene the relevant Veterinary Surgeons Act if it occurred in an Australian

jurisdiction. It is a requirement under the NSW Veterinary Surgeons Act for example that veterinary records must be sufficient that another veterinarian can take over the management of any case or herd/flock at any time.

- 3) that an investigation by the Investigations and Enforcement Program (IEP) into the reporting was not detailed in a public report on a high mortality voyage is extremely concerning. It was in the public interests that inaccuracies and discrepancies in the AAV reporting should have been raised in the Department findings as they have been in the past (eg for High Mortality Voyage 39 involving the Ghena, another LSS ship). The fact that the Department of Agriculture is no longer transparent with such serious issues, should be of grave concern to anyone (certainly any veterinary professional) monitoring animal welfare in the trade
- 4) as the Department of Agriculture have declined to check the maritime data provided by the AAV, VALE has done so. The checked data has been attached as a final addendum. Given that this data will not have been available to the IEP, it is likely that there will have been inaccuracies and discrepancies in reporting that have not received investigation by the IEP or the Department of Agriculture.

In addition to these specific concerns, we would be interested in your responses to the following questions:

- 5) it is likely that the health of surviving sheep would have been severely compromised by this incident. As part of the investigation of this disaster, did the Department of Agriculture request information regarding mortality in the Qatar feedlot after discharge from the Bader III?
- 6) why does the Department of Agriculture allow AAVs working as registered and government authorised veterinarians to operate on ships leaving from Adelaide and Fremantle without them being registered as veterinarians in the relevant states of Western Australia (WA) and South Australia (SA)? State boundaries extend 200 nautical miles from the coast and automatic secondary registration does not apply in WA and SA.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Sue Foster BVSc MVetClinStud FANZCVS
Spokesperson, Vets Against Live Export

References

Caulfield MP, Cambridge H, Foster SF et al. Heat stress: A major contributor to poor animal welfare associated with long-haul live export voyages. *The Veterinary Journal* 2014;199:223-228

Ferguson D, Fisher A, White B. Review of the livestock export heat stress risk assessment model (HotStuff). MLA, North Sydney, Dec 2008

Foster SF. Heat stress on live export voyages. Invited presentation to Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists, Gold Coast 2014 (Detailed lecture notes available on request)

McCarthy M. Pilot monitoring of shipboard environmental conditions and animal performance. MLA, North Sydney March 2005