

# Independent Observer summary report on MV *Maysora*

## Cattle and sheep exported to Israel and Jordan in October 2019

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Report 193, July 2020

### Voyage summary

A consignment of 10,274 cattle and 39,733 sheep were loaded onto the MV *Maysora* at Fremantle between 4 and 5 October 2019. Livestock were discharged at Eilat, Israel between 25 and 26 October 2019 and at Aqaba, Jordan between 26 and 29 October 2019, making this a 26 day voyage.

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

The overall mortality rates for the voyage were 0.20% for sheep (81 sheep), and 0.11% for cattle (11 cattle). These do not exceed the reportable mortality rates.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations and have been approved by the observer who accompanied this voyage.

### Independent observations of the 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.

#### Loading

All livestock had access to fresh water and fodder within six hours of being loaded. The ventilation system was running prior to the commencement of loading.

The observer reported cattle in pens which appeared to vary by more than 50kg from the average pen weight as required by [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock \(Version 2.3\) 2011](#) (ASEL) Appendix 4.1.2. Efforts were made to correct this non-compliance over the first 3-4 days of the voyage, however non-compliant pens were still present after this time. A number of smaller cattle were also observed; including at least 10-20 cattle that were observed having difficulty reaching over the 900mm bar supporting the feed and water troughs. No adverse health issues were observed as a result of this.

Cattle with horns greater than 12cm were observed penned with polled cattle. This was a non-compliance with ASEL requirements. No adverse health issues were observed as a result of this.

The lines of livestock loaded did not match the load plan supplied to, and used by, the stockpersons at loading. A week into the voyage, a second load plan was presented to the observer containing different lines of cattle.

The sheep Heat Stress Risk Assessment (HSRA) submitted stated that all sheep had a fleece of 10mm or less. It was observed that at least 35% (14,000 head) of the sheep on-board had a fleece length significantly longer than 10mm over most of their trunk. Fleece lengths of up to 50mm were observed. The majority of some lines were observed to have a fleece length non-compliant with the ASEL S1.19 requirement of less than 25mm. There were no directly observable adverse animal health outcomes observed as a result of fleece lengths on this voyage.

## **Personnel**

There was an Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and two LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) on-board the vessel. They were experienced and capable and worked enthusiastically and diligently to monitor and maintain livestock health and welfare. The observer expressed concern regarding the AAV, being needed to inspect the large number of sheep in the twin-tier decks in addition to other responsibilities.

The Chief Officer (CO) was observed to be diligent and hard working. The CO was observed walking all the livestock decks several times daily and supervised the livestock crew closely along with the bosun. He rapidly sought solutions to any problems identified with the livestock.

The bosun was observed on decks regularly and was hard-working. They were respected by the livestock crew and oversaw their work effectively. The crew were observed to perform their duties as required and in a timely manner.

The observer expressed concern regarding the number of crew on-board the vessel, the crew's experience, and their training. This was observed to impact the crew's capacity to perform additional tasks such as carcass removal and trough management in a timely manner during wash-down.

## **Daily routine**

The AAV inspected all sheep pens very early each morning and subsequently attended to any health issues arising. The stockpersons inspected their assigned cattle pens each morning from around 7:00am and performed treatments as required. Throughout the voyage, the AAV, stockpersons, CO and observer all walked the decks each morning from around 6:00am. Up to and including 24 October 2019, a meeting was held every morning at 10:30am between the Master, CO, AAV, and the observer. The AAV and stockpersons repeated their livestock inspection activities through the afternoon and moved livestock when required.

Each night, from 6:00pm to 6:00am, three night watchpersons were on duty. They walked the decks continually monitoring food and water troughs. They were tasked with alerting the senior crew and the AAV to mortalities and other animal health issues, if they occurred.

## **Feed and water**

Feeding occurred twice daily. The upper decks were fed each day at 6:00am and 3:30pm, and the lower decks at 10:30am and 1:00pm. Pellets were mechanically transferred from storage silos to the hopper bins on the roof of the decks. Fodder was then automatically supplied to pipes which gravity fed most of the pens. Some pens, by design, required manual feeding. Drinking water was supplied to all pens via automatic troughs.

On 21 October 2019, repairs were made to the water system without turning on the backup system. Early in the morning, troughs on Deck 10 and Deck 11 were observed to be dry. Water was seen flowing in the troughs within 30 minutes of the issue being reported to the AAV. No animal health issues were observed as a result of this disruption in water supply.

Non-compliance was observed with ASEL S5.5b which requires adequate feed and water to be supplied to those livestock waiting to be discharged. On the morning of 26 October 2019, during cattle discharge, it was observed that all of the cattle fodder troughs were licked clean. The automatic feeding system did not appear to be in use with fodder only able to be supplied to some pens by the delivery pipes. The cattle were observed to have poor gut fill and to engage in frantic feeding when limited amounts of pellets were fed.

On arrival in Aqaba, the sheep were observed to be significantly hungry. On 27 October 2019, six mortalities of otherwise healthy appearance, were identified in positions strongly suggestive of death by smothering. During the rest of 27 October 2019 the observer witnessed several frantic feeding events. On 28 October 2019, crew members were observed manually scooping pellets from empty pens to pens with sheep still present. Direct adverse animal health effects, including 8 smothering deaths, were observed during discharge. The observer estimated that there was between 5 and 10 tonnes of fodder remaining in the silos at the completion of discharge.

## **Ventilation**

In the observer's opinion, ventilation was just adequate to maintain animal health for the sheep decks during the period around entering the Red Sea. The maximum wet bulb temperature reported for the voyage was 31.7°C in the cattle decks, and 31.4°C on the sheep decks, on 21 October 2019. The vessel made a series of manoeuvres during the voyage from Day 9 onwards to optimise airflow over the open decks. An example was on Day 9, when the vessel was turned 180° and sailed back along its outbound track for 10 nautical miles. The Wet Bulb Temperature on Deck 11, a sheep deck, was seen to drop from 30.7°C to 26.7°C within 20 minutes which provided significant relief for the sheep.

During passage through Bab Al Mendeb, the majority of sheep were observed to have a heat stress score of between 2 and 3. During the hottest parts of the day the observer estimated that, in the pens being observed, up to 10-20% of sheep were displaying open mouth panting. After passing Jeddah, on 21 October 2019, the heat stress score of the sheep decreased to between 1 and 2 at discharge. No cattle were observed at heat stress score 3 or above throughout the voyage.

There were no mechanical ventilation issues observed that impacted adversely on the livestock. No evidence for heat stress as a cause of death was observed in the animals which were subjected to post mortem examination.

## **Pen conditions**

The cattle pens and decks were not washed down for the first six days of the voyage. By this time the pads were deep, but firm, and presented no health issues. Following entry to the Red Sea, many cattle pads became wet, causing significant soiling of the coat for recumbent animals. The observer reported there was no evidence this increased the risk of heat stress or caused local irritation. The decks, pens and cattle were in generally good condition on arrival, and so too were the sheep.

Livestock crew were observed tipping water troughs directly into the adjacent sheep pens prior to cleaning the troughs in order to save time. When the observer informed the AAV of these actions, the crew quickly stopped using this technique. The pads did develop localised very wet muddy conditions as a result, but no adverse animal health effects were observed.

## **Health and welfare**

The medicines and equipment present in the veterinary room were assessed and found to include quantities in excess of the minimum requirements stipulated in ASEL.

There was occasional evidence of low level Bovine Respiratory Disease (BRD) in the consignment during the voyage. The AAV instructed stockpersons to treat all suspected cases of BRD as soon as possible.

On Days 3 and 4 of the voyage, the AAV assessed, and made rapid diagnoses of polioencephalomalacia in two cattle. The AAV instigated rapid and appropriate treatment despite not having seen this condition before. Both animals made significant improvements almost immediately, and were appropriately monitored for the rest of the voyage. The observer noted that this was excellent work by the AAV.

More than 760 treatments were administered, usually by Westergun, during the voyage. These were generally for wounds, lameness and both actual and suspected BRD.

There were 81 sheep mortalities on the voyage. Likely causes of death included enteritis, enterotoxaemia, pleurisy, pleuropneumonia, rectal prolapse and smothering. Four of the cattle mortalities were due to chronic or acute pneumonia, with the other mortalities observed as being due to bloat, misadventure or not determined.

## **Discharge**

Other than feeding issues, the unloading of cattle as seen by the observer at Eilat was uneventful. Most of the long-term hospital cases were able to walk off into hospital trucks for further treatment ashore; mostly for lameness. Three cattle were euthanased with a captive bolt gun because they were unfit for discharge, despite the best efforts of AAV and stock persons through the voyage. At one stage two bulls became "hip-locked" at the end of the discharge ramp. The observer noted that they were carefully separated by a stockperson.

The sheep were discharged, with the aid of the pilot sheep, and rarely required human handling. The pilot sheep were used very effectively and efficiently. The observer saw no animals on the discharge ramp that were unfit for discharge. On at least two occasions the observer came across moribund sheep that had been overlooked during the discharge process. The observer informed the AAV who immediately euthanased the sheep.

On the morning of 29 October 2019, during the final stages of discharge, the observer discovered a live but moribund sheep in the 'morgue'. Examination by the observer found that the sheep was conscious and responsive to stimulus. The observer immediately informed the AAV who euthanased the sheep quickly and appropriately.

## **Conclusion**

The AAV, stockpersons and crew were observed to perform their tasks well. However, staffing pressures during unloading, compounded by low fodder levels on arrival, created a need to manually transfer limited supplies of fodder. Not all livestock received fodder in a timely manner during discharge. Analysis by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment determined that sufficient fodder had been loaded to meet ASEL requirements for the voyage prior to departure and, whilst fodder was low, there is no evidence that supplies were exhausted. Temporary cessation of loading, and corrective actions taken by the AAV, at the time, limited the number of sheep smothered.

The department addressed the issues identified in this report with the exporter.

## Representative photographs of the voyage

**Day 4 Sheep in pen—Wool longer than stated on Heat Stress Risk Assessment**



**Day 5 Cattle in pen—mixed sizes in pens**



**Day 11 Sheep in pen—no issues**



**Day 16—Mixed poll and long horn cattle**



**Day 21 Cattle in pen—no issues**



**Day 22 Sheep in pen—Sheep pressing for feed**

