

# Independent Observer summary report on MV *Bahijah*

## Cattle and sheep exported to Israel in January 2020

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Report 212, May 2020

### Voyage summary

A consignment of 4,190 cattle and 8,954 sheep was loaded on the MV *Bahijah* at Fremantle from 3 January 2020. The vessel departed on 4 January 2020. The vessel discharged the livestock at Haifa, Israel between 24 and 25 January 2020, making this a 23 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.36% (16 mortalities) and the mortality rate for the sheep was 0.6% (54 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate for either species. The causes of these mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments are a summary of the key observations made 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

The observer commented that pens on the **final load plan supplied did not accurately reflect the available pen area on the vessel at loading**. The shipboard Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) commented in the end of voyage report that **several areas on Decks 5, 6 and 7 were not available for livestock**. The observer noted that these areas were subsequently made available to livestock and reported that **animals were reshuffled to correct the stocking density for affected pens**. Following redistribution of livestock, the stocking density of the vessel allowed **each animal 17.5% more space than required** by the [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 \(version 2.3\)](#) (ASEL) and the consignment's Heat Stress Risk Assessment plan. No negative impact on the health of the affected animals was observed as a result of this.

**Some of the sheep were penned adjacent to the cattle pens and were not strictly loaded in accordance with the species separation requirements under ASEL.** This was not rectified during

the voyage. The observer noted no negative impact on the health of the sheep or cattle as a result of this pen arrangement.

## **Personnel**

An experienced AAV and two LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) accompanied the voyage, and were responsible for implementing the exporter's procedures to ensure the health of the livestock throughout the voyage.

The vessel's master and Chief Officer (CO) were observed to be committed to the health of the animals and both required high standards from the livestock crew in the implementation of their daily routine.

## **Daily routine**

Daily management meetings were held at 10:00am, with the master, CO, bosun, AAV, a stockperson and the observer. Topics discussed included feeding, hospital pen cases, mortalities and other stock management issues as they arose.

## **Feed and water**

Fodder was loaded in accordance with ASEL requirements. Fodder was distributed automatically from silo tanks via elevators to gravity-fed troughs. Approximately 10% of feed troughs required manual filling by crew in some areas. Pellet fines were reported as minimal on this voyage and were effectively cleared from troughs routinely by the crew if they did appear.

Cattle were observed to have adequate access to feed and water. Livestock were fed three times daily, with top ups provided as required. **Sheep had reasonable access to feed and water for the duration of the voyage, however were not supplied all scheduled feeds at discharge.**

The vessel was fitted with four reverse osmosis units to generate water, which automatically replenished water troughs through a cock and ball system. The livestock crew were observed to maintain the water troughs in a clean condition throughout the voyage.

## **Ventilation**

The vessel had a total of seven decks, four fully enclosed and three open decks, with a combination of ventilation supply fans and exhaust fans. The observer reported that the ventilation system functioned without interruption during the voyage. Two additional portable fans were installed in an area with perceived reduced air flow on Deck 4 special from Day 8 and were observed to be effective in improving air flow in this area.

**The highest recorded wet bulb temperature reached 29.5°C on Day 8 as the vessel crossed the equatorial region. A second peak in wet bulb temperatures up to 27.5°C was reported on Day 16 as the vessel entered the Red Sea. During both these occasions, up to 20% of sheep were mildly heat affected, displaying a heat stress score  $\leq 2$ . The cattle displayed a maximum heat stress score of 1.**

## **Pen conditions**

Pen conditions were observed to be maintained effectively during the voyage.

Sea water splashed into open Decks 5 and 6 during rough weather on Day 11 resulting in water accumulation in some pens. The crew were observed to respond in a timely manner by installing splash panels and distributing sawdust bedding to affected pens.

Deck washing was performed on days 6-7, 10-11, 14 and 17-18. Deck wash operations were observed to be managed efficiently with minimal disruption to stock and were successful in maintaining suitable pad conditions.

Cattle and sheep pens on Deck 6 were not separated by a passageway, empty pen or impermeable barrier as required under ASEL. The observer noted that the sheep were moved to be separated from cattle by an empty pen during deck wash down and there was no negative impact observed upon their health during the voyage.

## Health and welfare

There were 16 cattle mortalities on this voyage. The AAV attributed twelve mortalities to enteritis by post-mortem examination. The AAV indicated that these cases were possibly linked to aflatoxin (mould), however this diagnosis was not conclusively confirmed. No visible evidence of mould was observed in the feed provided to livestock. The observer reported that all suspect cases were identified early and were treated symptomatically with strategic feed management and moved to provide affected cattle with more space. The remaining four mortalities were from euthanasia due to respiratory disease in two heifers, joint infection in one bull and one steer with lameness unable to stand.

54 sheep mortalities occurred on this voyage. The observer reported that the cause for the mortalities of the sheep were enteritis in 13 animals, pneumonia in 20, an infected wound in one sheep and no cause of death was determined for 13 sheep. Seven sheep died from misadventure on this voyage, six of which all occurred during discharge after scheduled feeds were not provided, in breach of ASEL.

Hospital pens were utilised on Deck 5 for cattle and Deck 6 for sheep. Animals in the hospital pens were managed by the AAV, with most animals recovering. One animal was hospitalised for bloat, and several heifers and a steer for enteritis. Twenty-three cattle were hospitalised and treated for lameness and recovered to be fit for discharge. Approximately 20 lambs were treated for pneumonia, shy-feeding and enteritis.

## Discharge

The cattle and sheep were discharged over 18 hours. The observer reported that livestock awaiting discharge were monitored closely by the crew. The observer reported that the discharge operation progressed well once it was underway.

Adequate feed was not supplied to sheep during the discharge period, in breach of ASEL. A lack of communication from the CO to the AAV and stockpersons resulted in feed not being supplied to sheep during the discharge period. As the lambs had been accustomed to being fed between three and four times per day, the observer described that, by the late afternoon, they appeared hungry and restless.

Rough weather conditions and a change in the discharge order resulted in delays in discharging the sheep. The observer believed that these delays worsened the feed aggression and vocalisation amongst the sheep. The AAV reported that they decided to not feed at this late stage

to reduce the risk of injury or death if sheep rushed to pellets. Six mortalities occurred during the discharge period due to misadventure from lambs catching their heads between troughs to reach spare pellets or from smothering.

### **Other**

Approximately 30% of sheep were observed on Day 6 to have a wool length of greater than 10mm but less than 25mm. This was not compliant with the Heat Stress Risk Assessment plan for this consignment, which required sheep to be newly shorn to 10mm. The observer commented that this wool length did not impact on the health of the sheep at any time during the voyage, particularly considering the vessel was entering winter in Israel.

### **Conclusion**

The observer stated that the performance of the vessels livestock crew, AAV and stockpersons was satisfactory throughout the voyage and demonstrated a commitment to the health of the animals.

The department has addressed the issues identified on this voyage with the exporter, including a breach of ASEL to feed sheep at discharge.

**Representative photographs of the voyage**

**Day 3 Sheep in pen – no issues identified**



**Day 6 Sheep in pen – Wool length >10mm**



**Day 6 Cattle in pen – no issues identified**



**Day 10 Cattle in pen – no issues identified**



**Day 18 Sheep in pen adjacent to cattle after wash**



**Day 20 Cattle in pen – no issues identified**

