

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Drover*

Sheep and Cattle exported to the Middle East in January 2020

Report 213, June 2020

Voyage summary

The *MV Ocean Drover* loaded 4,122 cattle in Portland on 24 January 2020, departing the same day. A further 831 cattle and 35,313 sheep were loaded in Fremantle between 28 and 29 January 2020 for two exporters' departing on 29 January 2020. The livestock were discharged at Sohar, Oman, between 10 and 11 February 2020; Kuwait, Kuwait on 13 February 2020; Hamad, Qatar from 15 to 16 February 2020; and Karachi, Pakistan on 19 February 2020, making this a 26-day voyage.

An Independent Observer (observer) boarded the vessel at Portland and disembarked at Hamad, Qatar.

The mortality rate for the sheep was 0.22% (78 mortalities). The mortality rate for the cattle was 0.1% (5 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate for either species. The causes of the mortalities were not linked to a systemic failure of either 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

Requisite exporter arrangements were available to address procedures relating to livestock management from loading through to discharge, including contingencies.

Loading

Cattle from one consignment were not loaded in accordance with the supplied load plan. The observer reported that substantial redistribution of cattle was undertaken after departure. No negative health impacts were observed as a result of this need to redraft cattle. The observer identified two bulls penned together with heifers for the duration of the voyage.

The sheep and cattle consignments for a second exporter were loaded in accordance with the [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 \(version 2.3\)](#) (ASEL) and the observer reported no loading or drafting issues for these animals.

Personnel

An Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and two LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) accompanied the voyage and were responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock.

The master, Chief Officer (CO), bosun and livestock crew operated professionally throughout the voyage.

Daily routine

Management meetings were conducted daily at 10:00am with the mater, CO, bosun, AAV and stockperson/s. Topics discussed included general vessel operational updates, feeding, fodder reserves and mortality reports. One stockperson failed to attend these meetings regularly and the observer believed that their communication concerning mortalities and treatments with the AAV was insufficient.

Feed and water

A fodder mate's receipt was not made available to the observer to confirm compliance with ASEL requirements. No concerns regarding the provision of feed supply to livestock were noted by the observer.

The vessel generated fresh water via four reverse osmosis units, in addition to water storage capacity. Water troughs were filled automatically via a ball and valve system and water supply was maintained throughout the voyage. For the first few days of the voyage, brown rust-tinged water was observed in troughs. The observer reported that this issue was discussed at a daily meeting and was managed on these days by running water first and discarding before being dispensed to livestock.

Cattle and sheep were fed twice daily. A small gap between the feed troughs and fodder chute was observed to result in the injury and death of some smaller lambs on this voyage. The stockpersons and AAV increased their monitoring of sheep at feed times to reduce the incidence of injuries.

Ventilation

The ventilation system functioned without interruption on this voyage. Decks 1-5 were fully enclosed with a combination of supply and exhaust fan shafts. Decks 6-9 were open and fitted with supply fan shafts only.

The average deck wet bulb temperature was 25.5°C, ranging from 21.4°C on Day 2 and reached a maximum of 29°C on Day 11. On day 16, the observer perceived that the adequacy of ventilation was reduced on decks 8 and 9 forward. Sheep in these areas were heat affected on this day, showing signs of heat stress score 1. On day 17, between 5-10% of sheep in the forward pens of decks 7, 8 and 9 were observed at a heat stress score 3. No mortalities attributed to heat stress occurred on this voyage.

Pen conditions

Pad conditions for sheep and cattle were monitored throughout the voyage and were observed to be managed acceptably for both species.

The stockpersons and vessel command proactively discussed wash-downs during daily meetings. The observer reported that the stockperson requested a deck-wash be performed of the lower decks on days 2 to 4, however rough sea conditions and lack of requisite trim prevented opportunities for this to occur. Actions taken by the crew included the use of sawdust in pens and wasted feed pellets in laneways to address pen conditions.

A wash-down of cattle decks was performed as required on days 9, 13-15, 22 and 23. Deck 6 was stocked with both sheep (forward) and cattle (aft). Wash-down of cattle on this deck was performed with regard to the health of the sheep.

Health and welfare

Five cattle mortalities and 78 sheep mortalities occurred on this voyage. As the observer disembarked at the first discharge port, the subsequent two cattle mortalities were not observed. One abortion was reported by the observer and one heifer calved a premature calf that survived for several days.

The observer reported that between 2-3% of cattle loaded in Portland showed clinical signs consistent with mild respiratory disease. The AAV reported that approximately 20 heifers required treatment for pneumonia and ocular and nasal lesions, which were observed to resolve as the voyage progressed.

A post-mortem performed on Day 4 was of a heifer with a septic jaw infection. Post-mortem examination of two heifers, one on Day 8 and a second on Day 25, revealed pneumonia as the cause of death. The AAV deemed one animal unfit for discharge on Day 16 and reported a mortality on Day 23 as trauma.

The observer identified many sheep with inflamed eyes at loading. The majority of these cases were observed to resolve, however one sheep required euthanasia for ill-thrift and blindness. A small number of sheep, approximately 15, developed scabby mouth within the week prior to discharge, with the worst affected animals segregated to hospital pens for supportive care.

Approximately half of the total sheep mortalities were as a direct result of entrapment of the heads of smaller lambs in a small gap around fodder chutes, feed troughs and pen railings. This resulted in deaths from smothering and a fractured limb necessitating euthanasia.

The AAV reported approximately 20 sheep deaths from enteritis/shy feeder complex, and the remainder died from either sepsis, pneumonia or heart disease. One sheep was euthanased for pizzle rot.

Discharge

The observer was disembarked at Hamad, Qatar, prior to completion of discharge. The observer commented that the AAV and stockperson were experienced and fulfilled their duties at discharge. The stockperson for one exporter disembarked the vessel prior to the completion of discharge at the Port of Hamad.

Conclusion

The main issues identified by the observer on this voyage was the required redistribution of a consignment of cattle after departure and the mortalities of young sheep related to vessel infrastructure.

Although the causes of the mortalities were not linked to a systemic failure of either exporter, the department addressed the issues identified by the observer with the relevant party.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 7 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 10 Cattle in pen prior to wash down



Day 14 Sheep's heads caught between troughs



Day 20 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 23 Cattle in pen at discharge—no issues identified

