

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Al Shuwaikh*

Sheep exported to the Middle East in February 2020

Report 216, May 2020

Voyage summary

A consignment of 63,948 sheep for a single exporter was loaded onto the MV Al Shuwaikh at Fremantle between 19 and 20 February 2020. The vessel departed on 20 February 2020. The vessel discharged at Hamad, Qatar, from 6 to 7 March 2020; Shuwaikh, Kuwait, between 8 and 9 March 2020; Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates, between 11 and 13 March 2020 and the final discharge was at Muscat, Oman, on 13 March 2020, making this a 24-day voyage.

An Independent Observer (observer) boarded the vessel in Fremantle and was approved to disembark prior to the completion of discharge at Muscat, Oman.

The mortality rate for the sheep was 0.2% (130 mortalities). This did not exceed the reportable mortality rate. 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 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, including contingencies.

Loading

The sheep were loaded in accordance with [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 \(version 2.3\)](#) (ASEL) and complied with the stocking density outlined in the exporter's Twin-Tier Ventilation and Management Plan. The observer reported satisfactory handling procedures and timely provision of water and feed for all livestock loaded.

Personnel

An experienced Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV), one LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) and one trainee stockperson accompanied the consignment, and were responsible for implementing the exporter's procedures to ensure the health of the livestock throughout the voyage.

The vessel's officers and crew were experienced and committed to the health of the sheep. The crew were observed to work in a quiet and patient manner.

Daily routine

Daily management meetings were held at 10:00am, with the vessel's officers, AAV, stockpersons and independent observer.

Pellets were fed to sheep twice daily, at 7:00am and 3:00pm, with provision of chaff additionally supplied to sheep in hospital pens. Feeding times were altered during the discharge period to ensure twice daily feeding.

Livestock crew were assigned to shifts between 7:00am and 6:00pm. The night watch comprised of one crew member on duty from 9:00pm to 7:00am.

Feed and water

Pelletised feed and chaff was observed to be loaded in excess of ASEL requirements, including contingencies.

Pellets were distributed to troughs automatically, however some troughs required manual filling by the crew. Two hospital pens were used on Deck 2 to accommodate shy-feeders. All sheep had sufficient space to access feed and shy-feeders were observed to improve. Pellet fines affected <25% of each trough and with no negative impact on the health of the sheep observed.

The vessel had reverse osmosis water generation capacity in addition to stored water in tanks. Water was automatically replenished to troughs via bell float valves. Water was available *ad libitum* for the duration of the voyage.

Ventilation

A combination of active supply and exhaust fans ventilate the enclosed Decks 1-5 and open Decks 6-9. The ventilation system functioned without interruption and no adverse conditions were observed on this voyage.

The recorded deck wet bulb temperatures ranged from to 16°C on day 19, up to 30°C in some areas on Days 7-10 as the vessel crossed the equatorial region. The observer reported heat stress scores mostly ranged from 0-2 throughout the voyage. A heat stress score of 3 was observed in <5% of the sheep on Decks 6-9 on Day 12. The observer believed that these sheep were heat affected due to the rate of change in temperature in these decks, rather than the recorded 29°C at this time. These sheep recovered and heat stress scores of 0-2 were observed the next day.

Pen conditions

Pen conditions were monitored throughout the voyage and observed to be maintained at an acceptable level. Pad conditions on Deck 1 were described as softer than other decks, however it was not observed to impact the health of the sheep.

Health and welfare

A total of 130 mortalities occurred on this voyage. Post-mortems were performed on most mortalities, which identified inanition as the main cause. Approximately 20% of mortalities were identified by the AAV as autolysed, so no post-mortem was performed.

The identification and removal of sheep to hospital pens requiring treatment was observed to be satisfactory. Approximately 201 sheep were transferred to hospital pens for scabby mouth in addition to 66 shy-feeders identified. All of these sheep were monitored closely and were successfully discharged.

Two lambs were born on this voyage. Although both lambs died, they were transferred with their dams to a hospital pen and observed to be cared for appropriately.

Discharge

Discharge was completed efficiently at all ports with consideration for animal welfare outcomes. The observer, AAV and stockpersons departed the vessel 5 hours prior to completion of discharge at the final port due to COVID-19 related travel limitations. The remaining sheep were inspected by the observer and AAV prior to disembarkation and no issues were identified.

Conclusion

Exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage, and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 5 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 8 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Feed troughs – no issues identified



Day 11 Pad conditions—no issues identified



Day 20 Sheep awaiting discharge—no issues identified

