

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Shearer*

Sheep and cattle exported to the Middle East in March 2020

Report 218, July 2020

Voyage summary

A consignment of 60,047 sheep and 696 cattle for a single exporter was loaded onto the MV Ocean Shearer at Fremantle from 5 March 2020. The vessel departed on 6 March 2020. The vessel discharged at Muscat, Oman, on 17 March 2020; Shuwaikh, Kuwait, between 19 and 20 March 2020; Doha, Qatar, between 21 and 22 March 2020 and the final discharge was at Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates, from 23 to 24 March 2020, making this a 20 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the sheep was 0.14% (83 mortalities). There were no cattle mortalities. This did 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 has 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, including contingencies.

Loading

Loading of the sheep and cattle was in accordance with [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 \(version 2.3\)](#) (ASEL). The crew were observed to demonstrate appropriate animal handling techniques. All livestock had access to water and food within 12 hours and cattle pens were observed to have sawdust applied at loading.

Personnel

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

The vessel's master, Chief Officer (CO) and crew were diligent and worked well together to achieve positive welfare outcomes for the consignment. Stock handling by the crew, stockperson and AAV was observed as appropriate.

Daily routine

Management meetings were held daily at 10:00am, with the CO, bosun, AAV, stockpersons and observer in attendance.

Overnight, livestock decks were inspected hourly.

Feed and water

Fodder loaded was in accordance with ASEL requirements. Pelletised feed was provided to livestock at least twice daily and the observer commented that fodder availability was satisfactory throughout the voyage. The presence of pellet fines delivered to feed troughs were a continual problem, particularly on the lower decks. The observer reported that this was managed well by the crew periodically emptying fines from feed troughs. Feed and water continued to be supplied to livestock throughout the discharge period, in accordance with ASEL requirements.

Water was available *ad lib* to livestock for the duration of the voyage. Water delivered to troughs during loading and the first two days of the voyage was discoloured. No negative impact on the sheep or cattle was identified as a result of this. After water was run out of the system, the water appeared clean. Access to feed and water troughs was acceptable, and the observer noted that larger pens had one additional water and feed trough than the other pens.

Ventilation

The ventilation system was observed to function continually without interruption of this voyage. The air flow to all areas of the vessel were perceived as adequate by the observer.

Daily reports from the AAV recorded a maximum wet bulb temperature of 30°C on Days 5 and 6 as the vessel approached the equatorial region and at 29°C as on Days 7 to 9. No signs of heat stress were observed on this voyage.

Pen conditions

Pen conditions for cattle and sheep were observed to be managed acceptably on this voyage.

Sheep pads tended to be dry and dusty at the beginning of the voyage. The observer reported that this was managed by the crew sprinkling water on the pads and this was observed to improve pad conditions and appropriately addressed the welfare of the sheep. The observer reported that this discontinued as the humidity increased on Day 6.

Cattle pads built up slowly and were stable during the first week of the voyage. A wash-down of cattle pens occurred on Day 7 and again on Day 10. Both sheep and cattle were present on Deck 6 and were separated by either an empty pen or barrier. The observer reported that this separation was effective in ensuring sheep were not affected by wash-down operations.

Pen area allocation was observed as satisfactory, with approximately 90-100% of sheep and cattle able to lie down at once in pens throughout the voyage.

Health and welfare

A total of 83 sheep mortalities occurred on this voyage.

Post-mortems were performed on most mortalities, which identified pneumonia and enteritis as the main causes. The AAV reported that 19 sheep required euthanasia, either due to a failure to respond to treatment or acute injury/illness. Four sheep were identified by the AAV and observer with dog bite wounds; two of these sheep required euthanasia and the remainder were treated.

Six mortalities were as a direct result of entrapment of sheep between the fodder pipe and feed troughs. The crew were instructed to alter the arrangement of feed troughs and this was observed to prevent entrapment of sheep, with no subsequent deaths resulting.

The AAV reported a total of 97 sheep treatments on this voyage for conditions including pink eye, lameness, inanition and two cases of neurological disease. Five sheep required treatment for shearing wounds. A total of 14 cattle were treated for pink eye, lameness and one case of lumpy jaw. The observer commented that hospitalised livestock demonstrated a high recovery rate and that all stock appeared healthy and well-conditioned at discharge.

Discharge

Discharge was completed smoothly and without incident at all ports with low-stress stock handling techniques observed throughout.

Conclusion

Exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage, and to be compliant with ASEL requirements. The observer reported that the officers, crew, stockpersons and AAV worked effectively to achieve positive outcomes for the livestock on this voyage.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 4 Pellet fines—no issues identified



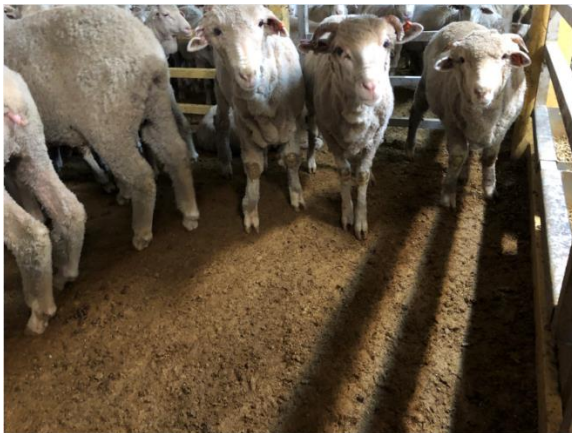
Day 7 Cattle pad conditions—no issues identified



Day 8 Sheep feed trough—injury risk identified



Day 15 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 17 Cattle pad conditions—no issues identified

