

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Al Shuwaikh*

Sheep and cattle exported to Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates in November /December 2018

Report 36, August 2019

Voyage summary

The *MV Al Shuwaikh* was originally built in 1986 and converted to a livestock carrier in July 2000.

The livestock (58,886 sheep and 312 cattle) were loaded in Fremantle with departure on 13 November 2018 and were discharged at: Kuwait on 29/30 November 2018, Qatar on 1/2 December 2018 and United Arab Emirates on 4/5 December 2018. The total voyage length was 25 days.

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

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.26% for sheep (153 mortalities) and no mortalities in the cattle consignment.

The mortality rate does not exceed the reportable mortality rate as stated in the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)). The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the observer that accompanied the voyage. The summary has been approved by the observer who accompanied the voyage.

Implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of livestock

Exporter documentation

The exporter Heat Stress Risk Assessment (HSRA) and load plan were submitted to the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources prior to departure as required. Load plan calculations are based on the average weight of each breed/type being allocated to a particular deck and area based on the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* (ASEL). An additional space requirement for animals was imposed on the sheep consignment, which allowed each animal 17.5% extra space than that required under ASEL.

Exporter voyage instructions and the Approved Export Program (AEP) addressing the care and management of the livestock from loading through to discharge were made available. These were observed to be implemented during the voyage and compliant with ASEL requirements.

Loading

The observer noted that the livestock were loaded in accordance with ASEL standards and the sheep were allocated an additional 17.5% space. The ramp surfaces between the decks were covered with grating approximately 5cm deep allowing the animals to ascend without slipping.

Personnel

The MV *Al Shuwaikh* had an Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) on board who had extensive experience in long haul voyages. There was also a LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) on board with over 20 years' experience in long haul voyages. The AAV and stockperson demonstrated a strong understanding and commitment to the welfare of the livestock during the voyage.

The Master and First Officer have extensive livestock vessel experience and had a regular presence on deck. They demonstrated sound knowledge and genuine care for the livestock and interacted with the AAV on all issues relating to animal welfare.

Depending on the deck configuration, there were two or three crew tending to the livestock on each deck. A bosun, tindal and night watch person provided additional services to livestock care during the voyage.

Daily routine

On each day of the voyage at approximately 10.00am, a meeting was held to discuss mortalities, fodder and water issues, environmental parameters, pad conditions or any other issues. The meeting was attended by the AAV, stockperson and members of vessel management team.

The AAV and stockperson spent sufficient time walking the decks, checking conditions and behaviour of stock to identify shy feeding lines.

A night watch person worked from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am. One crew member assisted the night watch person each shift. The duties of the night crew members was to monitor health and wellbeing of livestock and services, check water availability, and monitor temperature and humidity.

Feed and water

All livestock were fed twice daily. The first feed commenced at 7:00am and the second around 3.30pm. A considerable amount of labour was required to keep the troughs free from a build-up of fine material and stale or mouldy pellets.

Two fodder tanks are positioned towards the front of the vessel, one on the port side and the other on the starboard side. The entire system was computerised and controlled from a station room. The two systems can be operated individually (for example, one operating while the other is off). There was a surplus of 621 tonne of pellet fodder supplied above the ASEL requirements.

The livestock were fed in accordance with ASEL for each classes of livestock. The AAV and stockperson had the appropriate skills and judgement to relate the feeding regime and trough management to the condition of the stock in specific pens.

The watering system on board was efficient and well maintained. The water troughs were under 24 hour surveillance and the crew were aware of the high priority of maintaining ad lib water to the livestock. Repairs were undertaken in a timely manner if an issue was detected.

There are numerous fresh water tanks present within the hull of the vessel. Based on the amount of water in tanks at loading and capacity for generation by reverse osmosis, the vessel had a generous oversupply of water available compared with the ASEL specifications.

Ventilation

The ventilation configuration on board the vessel consists of two systems which function to hold type, one for open decks (6-9) and one for closed decks (1-5). The crew recorded temperature and humidity measurements every 4 hours. Temperatures on day two were around 26 degrees Celsius (C) dry bulb and 80% humidity. Temperatures on the hottest time was around 31/32 degrees C dry bulb and 86% humidity.

Overall, the environmental conditions were relatively benign.

Pen conditions

Due to deck type and configuration, cattle pen cleaning was a manual process of shovelling the pad into wheelbarrows and disposing of manure overboard. This cleaning methodology was undertaken on two occasions (day 9 and 14) and the observer considered it an effective pad management procedure. There was some variation in the pad conditions for sheep. The observer noted that the sheep welfare was not compromised in the pens with softer pads. The observer noted that the pens with softer pads were located in the lower closed decks and more likely in pens that had an exhaust ventilation duct.

Health and welfare

Temperature and humidity readings were recorded every four hours during the day on each deck. Overall for the duration of the journey, the environmental conditions were relatively benign.

The stock person, AAV and crew were diligent in ensuring water and fodder was delivered as appropriate.

The observer noted a high standard of care for the livestock and that any issues were addressed in a timely manner.

Discharge

During discharge, the observer noted that the livestock continued to be supplied with fresh fodder and water as during the voyage. The observer noted the processes of discharge had an overall satisfactory animal welfare outcome. During review of the observer's media by a departmental veterinary officer, one episode of minor non-compliant handling of two sheep was identified which was not noted in the observer's voyage report. The incident did not result in injury or harm to the sheep.

Conclusion

The observer determined that the relevant procedures relating to the management of livestock exported by sea were consistent with ASEL. The observer did not observe any deficiency of the undertakings of the AAV in relation to the activities in the approved export program.

The department forwarded the issue of the minor non-compliant handling of two sheep at discharge to the licensed exporter for corrective action for future export consignments.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 3 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 18 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 3 Sheep in pen - no issues identified



Day 5 Sheep in pen - no issues identified



Day 9 Sheep in pen - no issues identified



Day 15 Sheep in pen – no issues identified

