**VALE COMMENTS on IO 193: *Maysora* Fremantle to Israel and Jordan October 2019**

**Loading**

IO: The observer reported cattle in pens which appeared to vary by more than 50kg from the average pen weight as required by Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL) Appendix 4.1.2. Efforts were made to correct this non-compliance over the first 3-4 days of the voyage, however non-compliant pens were still present after this time.

VALE COMMENT: ASEL non-compliant

IO: A number of smaller cattle were also observed; including at least 10-20 cattle that were observed having difficulty reaching over the 900mm bar supporting the feed and water troughs. No adverse health issues were observed as a result of this.

VALE COMMENT: standard DAWE comment. No mention of the welfare impact or discomfort.

IO: Cattle with horns greater than 12cm were observed penned with polled cattle. This was a non-compliance with ASEL requirements. No adverse health issues were observed as a result of this.

VALE COMMENT: non-compliant and usual DAWE disclaimer about adverse effects.

IO: The lines of livestock loaded did not match the load plan supplied to, and used by, the stockpersons at loading. A week into the voyage, a second load plan was presented to the observer containing different lines of cattle.

VALE COMMENT: how very handy to have the correct plan at sea a week later.

IO: The sheep Heat Stress Risk Assessment (HSRA) submitted stated that all sheep had a fleece of 10mm or less. It was observed that at least 35% (14,000 head) of the sheep on-board had a fleece length significantly longer than 10mm over most of their trunk. Fleece lengths of up to 50mm were observed. The majority of some lines were observed to have a fleece length non-compliant with the ASEL S1.19 requirement of less than 25mm. There were no directly observable adverse animal health outcomes observed as a result of fleece lengths on this voyage.

VALE COMMENT: non-compliant with usual DAWE disclaimer

Personnel

IO: The observer expressed concern regarding the AAV, being needed to inspect the large number of sheep in the twin-tier decks in addition to other responsibilities.

VALE COMMENT: twin tier decks should have been taken out years ago

IO: The observer expressed concern regarding the number of crew on-board the vessel, the crew’s experience, and their training. This was observed to impact the crew’s capacity to perform additional tasks such as carcase removal and trough management in a timely manner during wash-down.

VALE COMMENT: concerning.

**Feed and water**

IO: On 21 October 2019, repairs were made to the water system without turning on the backup system. Early in the morning, troughs on Deck 10 and Deck 11 were observed to be dry. Water was seen flowing in the troughs within 30 minutes of the issue being reported to the AAV. No animal health issues were observed as a result of this disruption in water supply.

VALE COMMENT: of course no health issues from water deprivation

IO: Non-compliance was observed with ASEL S5.5b which requires adequate feed and water to be supplied to those livestock waiting to be discharged. On the morning of 26 October 2019, during cattle discharge, it was observed that all of the cattle fodder troughs were licked clean. The automatic feeding system did not appear to be in use with fodder only able to be supplied to some pens by the delivery pipes. The cattle were observed to have poor gut fill and to engage in frantic feeding when limited amounts of pellets were fed.

VALE: non compliant and for once no comment that this had no adverse effects

IO: On arrival in Aqaba, the sheep were observed to be significantly hungry. On 27 October 2019, six mortalities of otherwise healthy appearance, were identified in positions strongly suggestive of death by smothering. During the rest of 27 October 2019 the observer witnessed several frantic feeding events. On 28 October 2019, crew members were observed manually scooping pellets from empty pens to pens with sheep still present. Direct adverse animal health effects, including 8 smothering deaths, were observed during discharge.

VALE COMMENT: guess DAWE could hardly claim no health effects of that one – death a pretty compelling health effect.

**Ventilation**

IO: In the observer’s opinion, ventilation was **just adequate** to maintain animal health for the sheep decks during the period around entering the Red Sea. The maximum wet bulb temperature reported for the voyage was 31.7°C in the cattle decks, and 31.4°C on the sheep decks, on 21 October 2019. The vessel made a series of manoeuvres during the voyage from Day 9 onwards to optimise airflow over the open decks. An example was on Day 9, when the vessel was turned 180° and sailed back along its outbound track for 10 nautical miles. The Wet Bulb Temperature on Deck 11, a sheep deck, was seen to drop from 30.7°C to 26.7°C within 20 minutes which provided significant relief for the sheep.

During passage through Bab Al Mendeb, the majority of sheep were observed to have a heat stress score of between 2 and 3. During the hottest parts of the day the observer estimated that, in the pens being observed, up to 10-20% of sheep were displaying open mouth panting. After passing Jeddah, on 21 October 2019, the heat stress score of the sheep decreased to between 1 and 2 at discharge. No cattle were observed at heat stress score 3 or above throughout the voyage.

VALE: significant heat stress

IO: No evidence for heat stress as a cause of death was observed in the animals which were subjected to post mortem examination.

VALE COMMENT: wonder how many were too autolysed to do a PM

**Pen conditions**

IO: Following entry to the Red Sea, many cattle pads became wet, causing significant soiling of the coat for recumbent animals. The observer reported there was no evidence this increased the risk of heat stress or caused local irritation.

VALE: the muddy pens likely reflect heat stress with increased water intake and thus urination.

IO: Livestock crew were observed tipping water troughs directly into the adjacent sheep pens prior to cleaning the troughs in order to save time. When the observer informed the AAV of these actions, the crew quickly stopped using this technique.

VALE: lucky there was a diligent IO.

**Health and welfare**

IO: On Days 3 and 4 of the voyage, the AAV assessed, and made rapid diagnoses of polioencephalomalacia in two cattle. The AAV instigated rapid and appropriate treatment despite not having seen this condition before.

VALE COMMENT: an experienced AAV that hasn’t seen polioencephalomalacia? Interesting….

**Discharge**

IO: On at least two occasions the observer came across moribund sheep that had been overlooked during the discharge process. The observer informed the AAV who immediately euthanased the sheep.

VALE: unacceptable

IO: On the morning of 29 October 2019, during the final stages of discharge, the observer discovered a live but moribund sheep in the ‘morgue’. Examination by the observer found that the sheep was conscious and responsive to stimulus. The observer immediately informed the AAV who euthanased the sheep quickly and appropriately.

VALE: unacceptable.

**Conclusion**

IO: The AAV, stockpersons and crew were observed to perform their tasks well. However, staffing pressures during unloading, compounded by low fodder levels on arrival, created a need to manually transfer limited supplies of fodder. Not all livestock received fodder in a timely manner during discharge. Analysis by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment determined that sufficient fodder had been loaded to meet ASEL requirements for the voyage prior to departure and, whilst fodder was low, there is no evidence that supplies were exhausted. Temporary cessation of loading, and corrective actions taken by the AAV, at the time, limited the number of sheep smothered.

VALE: this report is one of the most critical VALE has read.

IO: The department addressed the issues identified in this report with the exporter.

VALE: how reassuring. What about pinging them for non-compliance??? No chance.