

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Al Messilah*

Cattle and sheep exported to Kuwait and United Arab Emirates in May 2019

Report 123, August 2019

Voyage summary

The *Al Messilah* commenced loading in Fremantle on 7 May 2019, and departed on 8 May 2019 carrying a total of 58,568 sheep and 474 cattle. The vessel discharged livestock in Kuwait on 23 May 2019, with the remaining animals discharged in Jebel Ali, UAE on 27 May 2019, making this a 21 day voyage.

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 0.16% for sheep (99 mortalities) and no cattle mortalities. This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate as stated in *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL)*. The causes of mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure on behalf of 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 this voyage.

Implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of livestock

Exporter documentation

Exporter voyage instructions relating to the care and management of the livestock during the voyage were made available, as were relevant specific management plans.

Loading

There were no animal welfare issues observed during loading. Loading was efficient and there were no stress indicators observed in the livestock.

Personnel

The Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) was suitably qualified and experienced in their role and demonstrated good work practices throughout the voyage.

The LiveCorp Accredited stockperson (stockperson) who accompanied this voyage demonstrated their experience, tending to the livestock with care and working well with the AAV and crew.

The Master walked the decks daily, provided instruction to the crew, and observed the livestock.

The Chief Officer (CO) worked well with the AAV and stockperson throughout the voyage. The CO was also seen on all decks assessing livestock daily and communicating with the boson and crew.

Daily routine

Twenty-five livestock crew attended to the decks, with each assigned designated areas of the vessel. Their tasks included cleaning walkways, ensuring feed and water troughs were full and clean, adjusting pens to reduce the density of each pen. The observer noted the crew showed a genuine interest in the care of the livestock throughout the voyage.

Temperatures were recorded daily by the crew and logged at the bridge.

Meetings were held daily at 10:00am with the CO, AAV, stockperson and IO to discuss the running of the livestock decks.

Feed and water

Feed and water systems on this vessel were automatic with water being of good quality and in continuous supply. Fodder was provided twice daily from holding tanks. Chaff was fed in addition to the pellet fodder for cattle, and provided to sheep as needed. Most decks had two water and two feed troughs per pen, with some having three feed troughs if there was space.

The observer noted that no water troughs were observed to be empty throughout the voyage.

Ventilation

Ventilation is provided by 79 supply and exhaust fans with fresh air being transported through a series of vertical pipes directing and extracting air via vents in and out of each pen. A series of large fans are also mounted at identified deck hot spots to increase air circulation. No interruptions were observed with the ventilation system during the voyage.

Thermometers were located on each deck. The AAV monitored the wet and dry bulb temperatures daily.

Pen conditions

Pad conditions remained firm for the first seven days of the voyage. As the humidity increased, the pad became firm to soft. After entering the Persian Gulf, humidity decreased which helped firm the pad over a 48-hour period. The observer did not identify any animal welfare issues.

The observer noted 50–100% of sheep were able to lie down during the voyage. Cattle were also observed to have had sufficient space, where greater than 50% could lie down at any one time.

Cattle pens were cleaned twice during the voyage by wheelbarrow and shovel, with wood shaving and sawdust used as bedding. The observer noted that the cleaning schedule was structured and no health and welfare issues were observed.

Health and welfare

The observer stated livestock treatments were managed well by the AAV, stockperson and crew. Shy feeders were identified early by the stockperson and cared for accordingly in hospital pens.

Treatments were administered by the AAV and euthanasia performed humanely. Mortalities for this voyage were the lowest in the vessel's 166 voyage history. The majority of the mortalities were attributed to enteritis and respiratory disease.

Temperatures for the voyage below decks reached a maximum of 34°C dry bulb, and wet bulb of 31.7°C. The average heat stress score was 2, with open mouth breathing observed in several sheep per deck during the hottest part of the voyage (heat stress score 3). No animals were observed with a heat stress score of 4 (open mouth, tongue out).

Lambs travelled well in the higher wet bulb temperatures with the least mortality rate encountered.

Discharge

No animal welfare issues were noted during discharge at either port.

Conclusion

There were no animal welfare incidents observed by the observer from loading through to discharge. The AAV, stockperson, Master and crew showed a genuine interest in the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage.

The observer determined that exporter voyage instructions and specific management plans were observed to be implemented and compliant with ASEL requirements.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 7 Sheep in pen — one sheep open mouth panting otherwise no issues



Day 9 Sheep in pen — no issues identified



Day 10 Sheep in pen — one sheep open mouth panting otherwise no issues



Day 13 Sheep in pen — no issues identified



Day 14 Sheep in pen — no issues identified



Day 15 Sheep in pen — no issues identified



