

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Bahijah*

Cattle and sheep exported to Israel in January 2019

Report 71, October 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 6,715 sheep and 4,721 cattle were loaded on the MV *Bahijah* at Fremantle on 26 January 2019. Loading was completed and the vessel departed on 27 January 2019. The vessel discharged at Haifa, Israel between 17 and 18 February 2019, making this a 24 day voyage.

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

The overall mortality rate for sheep was 0.49% (33 sheep) and for cattle was 0.19% (9 cattle). These do not exceed the reportable mortality rates. 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 the key observations made by the observer who accompanied the 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 and contingencies.

Loading

The vessel was loaded in accordance to the load plan and stocking densities were compliant with *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)). No issues were noted with the loading process.

Personnel

There was an Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) on board the vessel. The observer noted that the AAV and stockperson worked very effectively together and were proactive in identifying and resolving issues with livestock.

The master held overall responsibility of the livestock and was observed on the livestock decks checking infrastructure, feed and livestock and ensuring corrective actions if required.

The Chief Officer (CO) actively supervised the livestock decks and was seen several times every day monitoring the fodder, chaff, water and sawdust and addressing any of the AAV or stockperson's requests.

The bosun was organised and allocated tasks to the crew often in consultation with the stockperson.

Daily routine

Each pen of cattle was visually examined twice a day to identify any individual animals that required segregation or treatment.

A daily meeting was chaired by the master. The topics of discussion included ventilation, fodder management and plans and the daily reports.

The dry bulb temperature and humidity were measured on each deck by a hand held device every 4 hours. The average temperature and humidity recordings were used for the daily report.

Feed and water

Pellets were delivered to the feed troughs by gravity fed chutes. In addition, some troughs required manual filling by the crew as they did not have a chute directly to the trough.

Sheep and cattle were fed twice per day. The morning feed commenced at 6:00am and the afternoon feed at 3:00pm. As the voyage progressed, the master allowed the distribution of additional feed. No issues were noted with supply of fodder throughout the voyage.

All pens were fitted with at least one water trough where the water level was controlled by a ball valve. Sheep and cattle had access to ab lib water except when the water was turned off briefly so the troughs could be cleaned or on the odd occasion where the valve malfunctioned and the trough overfilled.

Ventilation

There were 68 ventilation units on the vessel. Each unit either supplied or extracted air from the relevant deck below. On day 9, one of the ventilation units was changed from supplying to extracting air because the fan was previously sending the warmer air exiting the engine room into the livestock decks. There were no ventilation failures during the voyage.

The maximum temperatures were 30°C dry bulb and 86% humidity and there was no signs of heat stress observed during the voyage.

Pen conditions

Sawdust was loaded and was provided in the sheep, cattle and hospital pens. Sawdust was also used strategically throughout the voyage for soaking up water in pens.

Early in the voyage, the observer noted some sea and rain inundation on Decks 5 and 7. The water inundation was managed using deck washing or application of sawdust.

Decks containing cattle were washed on a regular basis using high pressure sea water. Wash downs were coordinated by the bosun and supervised by the CO.

Regular full deck washing occurred on a three day cycle (except for the last wash on day 17) and commenced on day 5. Cattle decks were washed over two days (open decks one day, closed decks the next).

On the lower decks, small grates were removed to allow the effluent to flow down the drains. Some of these grates were inside the cattle pens and their intention was to prevent cattle falling into the drain. On 3 occasions the observer witnessed some of these grates were not replaced after the wash had been completed. The master also identified this and took corrective action.

The observer noted that the sheep pads were in good condition remaining dry to moist. It was noted that pads exposed to direct sunlight were the driest compared to pens on the same deck out of direct sunlight.

The observer noted that some gates between pens were opened to give the cattle more room and additional trough access. On three occasions, the opened internal gates were observed to be unsecured and able to swing or blocked access to 1 of 4 water troughs in the pen. The AAV took appropriate action to either close the gates or secure the gate to resolve the issues.

Health and welfare

Illnesses for both cattle and sheep included respiratory disease, bloat, pink eye, lameness and leg injuries, shy feeders and animals unable to rise. Detailed treatment records were maintained. Unwell animals were isolated for treatment and additional care.

Two cattle and one sheep were euthanised during the voyage which did not respond to treatment. The observer noted that all animals were euthanised competently.

At no time during this voyage were the temperature and humidity high enough to cause heat stress in either the sheep or cattle.

Discharge

No animal welfare incidents were noted at discharge.

Conclusion

The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 6 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 9 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 11 sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 18 sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 19 cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 21 sheep in pen—no issues identified

