

VALE COMMENT ON IO 133 Ocean Drover Fremantle to Kuwait and UAE May 2019.

IO SUMMARY: The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

VALE COMMENT: this is patently untrue as unhealthy sheep were loaded in contravention to ASEL and a disproportionate number of these died as per the section on health and welfare.

Feed and water

IO SUMMARY: The water trough connections were not always reliable, but the CO managed the risk with constant surveillance and there was no impact on welfare during this voyage.

VALE COMMENT: good that the issue was managed but lack of reliability potentially a concern.

Ventilation

IO SUMMARY: Wet and dry bulb temperatures were recorded daily around 11:00am on each deck.

VALE COMMENT: only once daily recordings for a ME voyage is not usual or adequate.

IO SUMMARY: The observer noted that the ventilation was satisfactory. The AAV identified several potential hot spots at the start of the voyage. The CO took the precaution of reducing the stocking density in some of these pens.

VALE COMMENT: actual hotspots not detailed.

IO SUMMARY: The observations, combined with temperature and humidity records gathered by the observer at 31 pens indicated that from day 5 when the wet bulb temperatures reached 28°C there was a mild increase in heat stress scores (between 1 and 2) and it was common that 5 – 10% of sheep per pen would show a heat stress score of 3. This pattern maintained while the wet bulb temperature gradually increased to a daily max of 30 to 31°C on about day 10 when the vessel was passing Jebel Ali for the first time in the Persian Gulf.

VALE COMMENT: unacceptable heat stress on a May voyage. The AVA recommended no sheep should travel to the ME between May and October inclusive.

IO SUMMARY: The wet bulb temperatures dropped very quickly on days 11 and 12 towards arrival in Kuwait. Although the dry bulb temperatures on decks increased in the day or so before arriving in Kuwait (commonly 41°C), this was accompanied by a sharp reduction in relative humidity (commonly 14%) and wet bulb temperature (commonly 22°C). During this period of high dry bulb temperatures and low relative humidity the numbers of sheep showing a heat stress score of 3 was generally less than 5%.

VALE COMMENT: this is still above recommended morbidity level (McCarthy Review; AVA submissions to Govt).

IO SUMMARY: After departing Kuwait and returning toward Jebel Ali, the humidity and wet bulb temperatures on decks increased rapidly from day 14 to day 15 (commonly a daily maximum around 31°C and 85%). The heat stress scores increased during this period of rapid wet bulb increase, particularly in the pens identified as potential hot spots on decks 7 and 9 where 30 – 50% of sheep per pen showed heat stress scores of 3 on day 15.

VALE COMMENT: these sheep were subject to many days of heat stress.

IO SUMMARY: However this increase in the heat stress scores was transient as the sheep adapted to the rapid increase in wet bulb temperatures.

VALE COMMENT: the fact that animals were still panting suggests that adaptation was not particularly rapid.

Health and welfare

IO SUMMARY: A number of sheep estimated to be less than 200 were loaded with a condition score which did not meet Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL) requirements as fit to load. Most of these animals improved their condition during the voyage, however they also constituted a disproportionate share of the sheep mortalities.

VALE COMMENT: this is a systemic failure on the part of the exporter (see opening comments with usual Dept platitide).

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 9 Sheep in pen— one sheep open mouth panting otherwise no issues identified

VALE COMMENT: photo quality too poor to identify the affected sheep.