

VALE COMMENT ON REPORT 21: Maysora Cattle and sheep exported to Israel/Jordan September 2018

Personnel

IO SUMMARY: There was an experienced Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and three LiveCorp Accredited Stockpersons (stockpersons) on board responsible for implementing the exporter's procedures to support the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage. The master had been in command of livestock vessels for 6 years and also had extensive experience on the Maysora as a Chief Officer (CO). It was the CO's first voyage in that position however he has been working on livestock vessels since 2007, starting on the Maysora in 2010.

VALE COMMENT: despite all this combined experience, numerous issues were detailed due to inexperience of crew. Poor stockmanship also reported.

Daily routine

IO SUMMARY: They recorded temperatures every 6 hours.

VALE COMMENT: good frequency of monitoring but no information provided about temperature or humidity in the report.

Feed and water

IO SUMMARY: The observer reported that swing gates which were left open or not adequately tied restricted access to some feed troughs.

VALE COMMENT: restricted feed access

IO SUMMARY: At times water was turned off to repair a leak or not turned back on after a trough was cleaned. The observer reported that when water was reconnected some animals showed signs of thirst, however adverse health outcomes were not observed.

VALE COMMENT: water deprivation for any significant time is unacceptable. The fact that animals were thirsty indicates a significant welfare issue. There may not have been adverse health outcomes but there were undoubtedly adverse animal welfare outcomes.

IO SUMMARY: Approximately 5 pilot sheep were taught to walk on lead so they could be used to lead sheep off the vessel at discharge. These sheep were tethered for approximately 2 weeks and received 2 feeds a day. The stockperson reminded crew to provide pilot sheep with water at all times, generally this was followed, however some sheep only received water when fed. The observer did not record any adverse health outcomes associated with this practice.

VALE COMMENT: sheep being tethered for 2 weeks is not acceptable. The fact that sheep unable to move around were then not watered ie deprived off water is contrary to ASEL and OIE recommendations. An adverse animal welfare outcome is of major concern even if no (measurable) adverse health outcomes were noted.

IO SUMMARY: Chaff was provided to cattle on deck wash days. Feeding hierarchy observations were made during chaff feeds with smaller cattle excluded from chaff feeds as larger cattle dominated the available trough space. Suggestions by the AAV and stock people to have the chaff mixed with pellets to correct this problem were not taken up by the crew.

VALE COMMENT: this is a significant issue. The fact that a veterinarian and 3 stockpeople were unable to institute required changes on this vessel is of significant concern, again highlighting the risks inherent in live export regardless of how good the onboard Australian industry representatives are.

IO COMMENT:

During the initial phase of the first deck wash down, some cattle troughs were contaminated with faeces as the waste from Deck 8 flowed through hatches onto Deck 7 resulting in some cattle pens not having access to feed and water from 6:00am till 4:00pm.

VALE COMMENT: yet another incident of water and food deprivation. Issue of trough contamination is recurrent in the more "honest" reports (usually those that take longest for the Dept to release!).

Ventilation

IO SUMMARY: The observer recorded video of sheep exhibiting mild panting and raised respiration rate on Day 16 correlating with the hottest conditions recorded during the voyage.

VALE COMMENT: heat stress occurred to some degree but extent is not possible to assess as the Dept have not published the WBTs

Pen conditions

IO SUMMARY: In many of the pens, more than 50% of the cattle could lie down at any time.

VALE COMMENT: what about in the other pens?

IO SUMMARY: The observer identified several sections of flooring were a potential welfare risk for sheep. Removable squares of aluminium were opened by crew during wet weather for floor drainage which exposed sheep to potential foot injury.

VALE COMMENT: issues with flooring have been noted historically and continue to occur as evidenced by the IO reports.

Health and welfare

IO SUMMARY: A bull was attempted to be euthanised using a captive bolt pistol, however the stockperson did not confirm death prior to leaving. After the stockperson left, the observer determined the animal was still alive.

VALE COMMENT: the industry assure Govt that stockpersons are adequate on voyages and that veterinarians are not required. A veterinarian would not walk off without checking for death. It is unacceptable that an IO was required to identify the ineffective euthanasia and very lucky that the IO was there for animal welfare.

IO SUMMARY: The stockperson attempted to euthanase the bull with the captive bolt again, however it was inoperable. The bull was then bled out.

VALE COMMENT: protracted and possibly unstunned slaughter due to poor practice and poor equipment.

IO SUMMARY: The AAV reported 3 downer cattle and 3 cattle with Bovine Respiratory Disease were euthanised. The AAV also advised 3 sheep with inanition were euthanised. Causes for the remaining sheep mortalities were not provided.

VALE COMMENT: were the causes for sheep mortality not known or not provided. The wording is quite specific and could suggest that the IO requested the information and was not provided with it.

Other

IO SUMMARY The observer reported that the master failed to communicate agreed AAV recommendations to the CO. The observer noted that the master did not accept a recommendation to apply wood shavings to hospital pens in lower decks in order to avoid blockages, resulting in the wettest pad conditions on the vessel.

VALE COMMENT: inability of the exporter representatives to effect appropriate changes.

IO SUMMARY: There was no adjustable head bale or nose grip as required in appendix 4.1.9 of Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL).

VALE COMMENT: ASEL non compliance

IO COMMENT: A single lamb was born on this voyage and a separate pen was created to house it and the ewe.

VALE COMMENT: ASEL non-compliance

Conclusion

IO SUMMARY: The observer determined that the majority of procedures were complied with during the voyage, however some were not consistently followed. It was observed that several of these problems were resolved as the inexperienced crew became more competent and communications between the AAV, stockpersons and crew became more effective.

The department has addressed a breach of procedures with the exporter to ensure health and welfare of the livestock in relation to the inexperienced crew and the provision of clean fresh water during the first deck wash. Subsequent voyage observations did not indicate ongoing issues related to inexperienced crew.

The department addressed a breach of the procedures with the exporter to ensure health and welfare of the livestock in relation to the training the pilot sheep, and euthanasia of the bull. The department has also provided advice to industry more broadly regarding accepted alternate methods of euthanasia in the event of captive bolt failure.

VALE COMMENT: no penalties despite ASEL breaches.

IO SUMMARY: Considering available information, the issues identified by the observer do not demonstrate a systemic failure of the exporter's procedures.

VALE COMMENT: really?

Representative photographs of the voyage

IO SUMMARY: Day 11 Sheep in pen—no issues identified

VALE COMMENT: Dept seem not to have looked to closely at this photo. The photo clearly demonstrates flooding/poor drainage/excessive water in one corner of this pen.