

VALE COMMENT ON THE IO REPORT AND FOI DOCUMENT FOR REPORT 7

Voyage Outline

May 2018, Al Shuwaikh, Adelaide, Fremantle, Kuwait, Hamad, Jebel Ali; voyage length 30 days (from Adelaide), 24 days (from Fremantle); sheep mortality from Adelaide 0.98%; cattle mortality 0; sheep mortality from Fremantle 0.39% (46); cattle mortality 0.

The official summary for this report was only released in 2019. The voyage took place one month after the exposure of conditions on the Awassi Express by 60 Minutes and was an early voyage to have an independent observer. One would have assumed that for the exporter, which had not at that stage lost their licence, this was a “showcase” voyage. It was not.

Summary Voyage Statistics

Adelaide Consignment: departure date 10th May; 57208 sheep purportedly loaded and 56920 discharged with 563 mortalities counted (0.98%, very Close to the reportable limit of 1%). Numbers do not add up and a tally discrepancy of +275 head was noted ie 275 more sheep LEFT the ship than were apparently on the ship.

Adelaide ram lambs and rams had particularly high mortalities: 3.03% and 3.02% respectively but A Class wethers and YW (not defined) were also >1% (1.23% and 1.27% respectively).

VALE COMMENT: ***None of these details were available in the Official Independent Observer Report.*** Thus, the 0.98% mortality in the Adelaide consignment would not be known to the general public without the FOI report.

Pen and Ramp Surfacing

FOI DOCUMENT: “Upper tier ramps had a particularly steep incline, when compared to ramps between decks. I observed that sheep were extremely reluctant to descend these ramps at discharge or when moving between decks.” This is clearly unsatisfactory. VALE note the Al Shuwaikh was converted to a livestock carrier in July 2000.

VALE COMMENT: There was no mention of this issue in the official Independent Observer Report under the Pen or Loading sections.

Fodder

VALE COMMENTS:

1. There were considerable food quality issues on this voyage.

2. The IO stated that “My observations found that dusty pellet fines were consistently being presented to deck 6 and deck 1 in particular...this was due to two factors: firstly, the poor physical durability of the pellet, and secondly, the fact that the pellets had to travel an extended distance up, and then down through the system to reach decks 6 and 1....all indicated that the fodder pellet from [redacted] had a very poor durability characteristics when compared to the [redacted] pellets.”

VALE notes that this has been noted in other reports for other export vessels. We are unsure whether this is a problem with pellets loaded in Perth. It is concerning that after 40 years, this industry still hasn't managed to sort appropriate pellets for the trade.

3. The IO continues: “I observed crew using a special flat headed “stirring’ spade to turn over fodder not yet consumed. This effectively freshened the fodder remaining in the trough...This task was supposed to be carried out on a daily basis however toward the end of the voyage, I did observe numerous troughs, both sheep and cattle, with mouldy fodder solidified in the bottoms....Fodder availability and accessibility for cattle was excellentMy only concern was that I observed fresh fodder routinely being placed on top of fodder not yet consumed. This resulted in mouldy pellets being found in the bottom of some troughs.”

So not only were the pellets of poor quality, but mouldy food was being fed.

4. There were further issues noted with sheep: "Fodder availability and accessibility for sheep was generally very good throughout the voyage except in pens that had a higher stocking density. In these pens, I regularly observed shy, and animals with ocular lesions reluctant to 'push' pass other sheep in order to source fodder". This fact was not included in the IO Report.

5. In addition, further problems were evident during discharge in Kuwait when livestock were without fodder for two sequential feedings (30-32 hours) and sheep were observed to vocalise loudly for the only time in the voyage. ***The time period of food withholding was redacted from the documents received under FOI.***

It is interesting that even with the reduced stocking density, the IO has noted that sheep still have difficulty accessing troughs.

Ventilation

IO SUMMARY REPORT: "On approximately eight days of the voyage, the IO observed sheep open mouth breathing and attempting to gain position around the ventilation vents on all open and closed decks. This was more notable on hot days with higher humidity. In these instances, death by smothering was an observed outcome and six to eleven of the observed mortalities around the ventilation vents could have been attributed to smothering. This situation appeared to be more apparent in pens with higher density."

FOI DOCUMENTS: ***the information in the IO summary was redacted by the Department in the FOI Documents thus unavailable***

VALE COMMENT: open mouth breathing is evidence of severe heat stress. The Department covered up heat stress by redacting this information from the FOI Documents.

Health and welfare

IO REPORT: Temperature and humidity readings were recorded every four hours during the day on each deck. Wet and dry bulb thermometers were well positioned along the aisles of each deck. The positioning gave an effective representation of the environmental conditions.

VALE COMMENT: WBT monitoring appears to have been satisfactory.

IO REPORT: "The IO found that the closed holds had consistently higher temperatures and humidity than the open holds. The IO surmises that this may have been partly due to the oil fuel heaters being left on during the equator crossing. These oil fuel tanks were located against the walls of the closed holds. The oil fuel is heated in order for it to flow efficiently through the engines. When this concern was raised to the AAV, CO and Master, the heaters were immediately shut down and temperatures were significantly reduced within 48 hours."

VALE COMMENT: without this diligent IO, presumably sheep would have been exposed to the increased heat from the oil fuel heaters. One has to question why a) this occurred on this very well used live export carrier and b) why neither the AAV nor stockman noticed the issue and rectified the problem until it was pointed out to them by the IO. The AAV was reported to have had 8 years of experience on long haul voyages. The stockman, 25 years. This IO appears to have been more diligent and vigilant than the hired personnel.

IO REPORT: "Deck nine was observed to contain livestock with consistently elevated respiratory rates. This was likely related to the dark coloured steel roof surface absorbing radiated heat from above."

Discharge

IO REPORT: sheep were not fed were 30-32 hours and also had fouled water troughs due to inadequate personnel.

VALE COMMENT: this is contrary to OIE recommendations.

NOTE: The FOI documents are heavily redacted but some critical comments still remain. Some details that were later published in the IO Summary are evidence of the cover-up still occurring in the

Department of Agriculture. The sheep number from Adelaide is erroneous with 275 MORE sheep being unloaded than possible. The 0.98% figure thus cannot be accepted as being correct: it could be an under-estimate (if extra sheep loaded to cover possible deficits) OR, it could be an over-estimate (if the number of sheep loaded was truly less than stated). Number discrepancies for this exporter have been evident on other high mortality and routine mortality voyages.