

VALE COMMENT ON THE FOI DOCUMENT FOR REPORT 7

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.

No official summary for this report exists. 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).

Pen and Ramp Surfacing

The IO stated that “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.

Fodder

There were considerable food quality issues on this voyage.

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.

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

In addition, to these issues, further problems were evident during discharge in Kuwait when livestock were without fodder for two sequential feedings. The reason for this is redacted but the IO clearly felt it was a welfare issue as they went on to say "Of significant concern, I noted that this was the only time period during the entire voyage that I heard sheep vocalising loudly.

Water

Water was not always available for animals. The IO states that "on a number of occasions, in an attempt to prevent wet pens, crew would switch off the water supply to a selection of troughs, if a leak was noted. The leakage report was not always passed onto the 'plumber' in a timely manner, if at all...[redacted] ...This poor crew communication resulted in some pens **being without water overnight on numerous occasions** [VALE's bolding].

When water was there, it was not necessarily of high quality. "Toward the end of the voyage and during discharge, I observed a higher number of water troughs contained fouled water. Manure was falling from upper tiers into waters below..due to:

- Less crew allocated to maintain water quality and general husbandry duties
- The excess manure..in the upper tier overflowing ..into water troughs below
- [Redacted phrase] The lack of water maintenance began to appear after day 18 of the voyage

Lighting

The IO notes that lights are left on twenty four hours day for worker health and safety. Whilst this is understandable, constant exposure to light with no diurnal variation is a welfare issue for animals. The IO also noted that the lower tier pens of each closed deck were particularly dark and that some person/persons [details redacted] did not carry or utilise a torch when inspecting sheep in these poorly lit pens.

Environmental parameters

Temperature and humidity were recorded each four hours and the IO felt that the positioning of the instruments allowed representative measurements. Of concern however, is the fact that "fuel oil tanks" were a significant source of heat in the closed holds. The IO noted that these tanks were used first to allow the heaters to be shut down prior to arrival at the equator.

The IO noted that closed holds consistently had higher temperature and humidity than open holds and observed numerous sheep on deck 9 with consistently elevated respiratory rates due to the dark colour on the external surface of the pen roof plus the cumulative heat load rising from lower decks.

Many of the comments in this section were redacted.

Crew Summary

All redacted

Crew deployment

Mostly redacted apart from one comment "Training, or lack of it. Nothing formal. Vessel gets the crew that KLTT send.

Hospital pen positions

The IO noted difficulty moving compromised sheep to the pens.

NOTE: The FOI documents are heavily redacted but critical comments still remain. 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.

NOTE: despite his voyage being in May and FOI documents available, there is still no official Summary Report. Is it because the DAWR didn't want to see a not very good voyage, with near reportable mortalities and incorrect sheep numbers occurring immediately after the Awassi Express exposure and independent observers instigated. Is it the case that one IO refuses to back down and agree to a DAWR summary? They made Moss and Lawler backdown.....could one IO possibly be holding out?