

# **Independent Observer summary report on MV *Al Messilah***

## **Cattle and sheep exported to Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in April 2019**

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**Report 105, October 2019**

### **Voyage summary**

A consignment of 65,115 sheep and 312 cattle were loaded on the MV *Al Messilah* at the port of Fremantle on 2 and 3 April 2019. The first discharge was at Kuwait on 17 April 2019, the second discharge was at Hamad, Qatar, between 19 and 20 April 2019. The final discharge was at Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates, between 21 and 22 April 2019, making this a 21 day voyage.

The mortality rate for sheep was 0.29% (189 mortalities) which does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. There were no cattle mortalities. The causes of the sheep mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations and has been approved 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, including contingencies.

#### **Loading**

The vessel was loaded according to the load plan and no issues were observed. Adjustments were made during the first few days at sea, to maximize the space available on the vessel. There was sufficient room for 50 to 100% of animals to lie down during the voyage. All hospital pens were empty at the start of the voyage. There was enough room for the sheep and cattle to manoeuvre around pens to access feed and water and no issues were observed in relation to overcrowding and herd flock hierarchy.

#### **Personnel**

The Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) that accompanied the voyage had previously worked in this role on many long haul voyages.

The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) was experienced having worked for several years in both feedlots and livestock vessels.

There were dedicated livestock crew, including the bosun and night watchmen on board the vessel.

### **Daily routine**

Management meetings were held each day at 10:00am. The Chief Officer (CO), AAV, stockperson and the observer were present to discuss the management of the livestock, feed and water consumption, deck condition, treatments, mortalities and any other issues arising from the previous day.

The AAV made their rounds each morning and afternoon assessing the livestock and performing treatments where needed. Post mortem inspections were conducted each morning, at around 11:00am, after the daily management meeting. The AAV worked well with the stockperson and discussed any issues which needed attention.

The stockperson could be found checking stock, mortalities, pen conditions, checking feed and water troughs, feeding out chaff etc. throughout the day. They worked well with the crew and AAV at all times.

Three night watchpersons shared the night watch arrangements from 6pm to 6am on four hourly rosters. They walked the decks checking water lines, feed, water, and looking for sick animals or any other issue which arose during the night.

### **Feed and water**

Feed was in a pelletized form. Chaff and sawdust were stored in bags under cover on the upper decks. The feed and water systems were automated. Feeding was performed in the morning at approximately 6:00am, and again in the afternoon at 2:30pm. Fines which accumulated in the feed troughs were emptied as required. Water was supplied to automatic troughs which were cleaned twice daily.

Excessive fines/dust in the pellet feed on the port side feeding auger caused it to block and become inoperative on day 12. This affected the feeding of livestock on Decks 8, 9, 10 and the port side. A short term measure was implemented to supply feed to these decks using the starboard side feed system. This system was slower so feeding was started 1 hour earlier and an extra feed was provided at 12:00pm. This ensured the sheep received adequate feed until the repair to the auger was completed on day 14.

### **Ventilation**

The vessel traversed the equator for around 6 days where temperatures rose to a maximum of 35°C dry bulb, with humidity at 86% and a wet bulb temperature of between 28-31°C. Once the vessel entered the Persian Gulf, temperatures decreased to 25-30°C dry bulb, with humidity levels reduced to around 65%. During the warmest period of the journey respiratory rates were at stage 2 with a handful of sheep being observed with open mouth breathing.

The pens located around the engine room on Decks 6, 7 and 8 were considered to be the main hotspots on the vessel. These pens were closely monitored during the warmest period of the voyage and no heat related mortalities were observed.

### **Pen conditions**

The pad conditions for the sheep and cattle remained dry to firm throughout the voyage. The pens were cleaned twice during the voyage.

### **Health and welfare**

The crew took good care of the livestock from feeding and watering to keeping the decks clean and removing sick animals from pens and placing them in the hospital pens.

There were 2 lambs born during the voyage to ewes ear-marked as wethers. Both ewes were found and cared for in a hospital pen until being unloaded in Jebel Ali.

During the voyage, several treatments were administered to the sheep for shearing wounds and diarrhoea. No treatments were administered to the cattle.

A majority of the sheep mortalities were due to inanition or shy feeders. Other causes of the sheep mortalities included several findings of pneumonia and enteritis.

### **Discharge**

Discharge at Kuwait, Hamad and Jebel Ali were completed without incident.

### **Conclusion**

The observer noted that overall the voyage went well with no signs of animal welfare issues observed from loading, during the voyage and through to discharge in the Middle East.

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

## Representative photographs of the voyage

**Day 3 Cattle in pen — no issues identified**



**Day 4 Sheep in pen – no issues identified**



**Day 11 Cattle in pen — no Issues identified**



**Day 11 Sheep in pen — no issues identified**



**Day 17 Cattle in pen — no issues identified**



**Day 18 Sheep in pen – no issues identified**

