

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Ocean Drover*

Sheep and cattle exported to Kuwait and United Arab Emirates in May 2019

Report 133, October 2019

Voyage summary

The *MV Ocean Drover* commenced loading in Fremantle on 25 May 2019, departing on 26 May 2019 carrying a consignment of 56,915 sheep and 135 cattle. The livestock were discharged in Kuwait from 7 - 9 June 2019, and the United Arab Emirates on 10 - 11 June 2019, making this an 18 day voyage.

An Independent Observer (observer) boarded the vessel in Fremantle and remained on board until completion of discharge.

The mortality rate for sheep was 0.11% (65 mortalities) and 0.74% for cattle (1 mortality). These do not exceed the reportable mortality rates. The causes of the 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, along with contingencies.

Loading

The vessel was loaded in accordance with the load plan, although there were examples of variations in individual pen densities. These variations did not impact animal welfare.

Personnel

The Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) had extensive experience with both ruminants and long haul voyages. The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanying the consignment had over 20 years' experience as a stockperson on long haul voyages. The AAV and stockperson demonstrated a strong understanding of and commitment to the welfare of the livestock.

The master and crew were experienced in the transport of livestock and their care and management of the livestock was satisfactory. The Chief Officer (CO) was actively involved in all

aspects of the livestock management and demonstrated a satisfactory commitment to the welfare of the livestock.

Daily routine

A daily management meeting was held at 10:00am each day to discuss mortalities, feed, water, housekeeping and any other relevant issues. The CO, bosun, AAV, stockperson and observer attended the meetings. The AAV would check some decks before breakfast and again before the daily meeting and discussed any feed and water or health issues arising from these rounds.

During the morning feed, crew would walk the decks identifying any sick or injured animals and alert the AAV. The observer noted that the AAV responded quickly to issues.

The deck crew were not required to conduct any maintenance or other work. For the entire voyage they were all dedicated to stock duties. The observer noted this was a significant management decision enabling the crew to focus on the care of the livestock.

Between 8:00pm and 5:00am, a crew member would inspect each deck with their main duty to ensure water was available.

Feed and water

The livestock were fed twice a day, between 6:00am and 7:00am, and again at 3:30pm. They would remove fines or faeces from the trough before being filled with fodder. Certain pens were provided additional feed as determined by the stockperson or AAV.

Between 8:00am and midday, the crew would move through the pens and clean and maintain water troughs. Dirty water was emptied into buckets or wheel barrow, and then tipped into a drain. If the water was clean, a modified sifter was used to remove contaminants from the water.

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.

The feeding and housekeeping schedule appeared to be both efficient and effective. The observer noted that the integrity of the pellets was good and there was absence of mould and only small amount of fines found.

Ventilation

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

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.

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.

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%.

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. However this increase in the heat stress scores was transient as the sheep adapted to the rapid increase in wet bulb temperatures. Adverse animal welfare outcomes were not observed at any of the potential hot spot locations during the voyage.

Pen conditions

The condition of the sheep pads generally remained firm to dry throughout the voyage.

The cattle pens were washed on day 10 although they were still in a satisfactory condition at that time and remained satisfactory for the voyage.

Health and welfare

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.

Discharge

The crew were divided into three groups to work 24 hours per day on three eight-hour shifts. The CO and bosun had specific plans for each discharge, dedicating crew members to maintaining the feed and water to all of the livestock remaining on board.

No issues were identified by the observer during discharge.

Conclusion

The observer determined that animal health and welfare outcomes for livestock on the voyage were satisfactory, and that exporter arrangements relating to the management of livestock exported by sea were consistent with ASEL and observed to be implemented during the voyage.

The issue related to sheep that were loaded with condition scores which did not meet ASEL requirements was addressed with the exporter and the relevant parties. This issue will be monitored on upcoming voyages.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 4 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 5 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 7 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



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



Day 13 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 15 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

