

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Bahijah*

Cattle exported to Israel in September 2018

Report 20, May 2019

Voyage summary

The MV *Bahijah* has a total of seven decks for the carriage of livestock. The three upper decks are open and the four lower decks are fully enclosed.

The *Bahijah* commenced loading on 16 September 2018 in Fremantle and departed the following day carrying a consignment of 5907 cattle to Israel. The livestock were discharged in Eilat, Israel on 5 October 2018, meaning the cattle were on board the vessel for a total of 20 days.

The independent observer (observer) joined the vessel in Fremantle.

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.07 per cent for cattle (four mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate as stated in the [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock \(Version 2.3\) 2011](#) (ASEL). One of these mortalities were linked to a failure to select appropriate cattle or identify them for rejection prior to loading. The remaining three mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the observer from loading in Fremantle until discharge in Israel. The summary has been approved by the observer who accompanied this voyage.

Implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of livestock

Exporter documentation

All necessary exporter documentation was submitted to the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources prior to departure including the Heat Stress Risk Assessment (HSRA), voyage instructions and load plan.

Loading

One bull was hospitalised shortly after loading for lameness. It did not respond to treatment and was later euthanased. Another bull was loaded and later found to not meet importing country requirements and was euthanased.

The department referred this issue to the exporter and they have since submitted a non-conformance and rectification report to the department that details procedures to minimise the likelihood of a reoccurrence of this issue on future voyages.

Personnel

The Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) worked very hard and professionally. The LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson's communication skills and ability to manage this trip was exemplary, and their work ethic and aptitude were very good. The junior stockperson was hard working, thorough and very capable.

The crew were experienced, capable and receptive to instruction from the boson and Chief Officer (CO) as well as requests from the AAV and stock people. The officers on board, especially the Master and CO, were highly effective and co-operative.

Daily routine

Daily meetings were held at 10:00am attended by the AAV, stock people, Master, CO and observer. The boson attended on non-deck washing days. Daily reports were lodged by the CO at midday after the AAVs input.

Recordings of temperature were taken every four hours on all decks and a daily average recorded for each deck.

Feed and water

Two or three feeds were provided each day on instruction from the stockperson to the boson. The AAV collated data on a spreadsheet designed to keep track of fodder and chaff consumed and remaining on board. This was used to compare against the COs estimations over the course of the journey.

Water was delivered by an automatic 'float and tap' to each trough. The water system required constant monitoring. Cattle were very adept at pulling off hoses. Leaks and hose malfunctions were fixed as they were noticed.

Ventilation

The ventilation on the vessel was very good overall, however one issue was observed. An intake tower located very close to open engine room doors increased temperatures in pens behind the engine room on decks five, six and seven, especially when there was a following wind. Conditions in these pens were not bad on this relatively cool voyage.

The department will monitor this on future voyages in warmer periods.

Pen conditions

The cattle handled the voyage very well, however when water consumption and faecal matter production increased, it became more difficult to keep pens clean despite application of saw dust and chaff. This was particularly evident on lower/enclosed decks.

Deck washing started on 24 September 2018. The routine for the remainder of the voyage was to wash down the upper decks one day, the lower decks the next day then a day of no washing. The cleaning was thorough and this routine worked well to maintain acceptable pen conditions and support animal welfare.

Health and welfare

The health and husbandry of the cattle was very well managed by professional crew under the supervision of a competent and diligent AAV, stock people and Master.

At no time were there signs of distress or increased respiratory rate due to heat stress.

The final mortality count was four bulls for the voyage, all of which were euthanased.

No mistreatment or disregard for animal welfare was observed.

Discharge

Unloading was performed efficiently and no health or welfare concerns were observed during the process.

The AAV stayed on board until the last animal left the vessel.

Other

This shipment carried strong and healthy stock that were well used to the feed prior to departure.

Conclusion

The observer found the overall management of the vessel could not be faulted. The cattle had a low stress voyage, very low mortality rate, maintained good condition and appeared to gain weight overall.

The observer determined that apart from the issue relating to stock selection, the relevant procedures for the management of livestock exported by sea were consistent with ASEL and additional conditions of export.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 1 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 3 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 8 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 11 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 14 Cattle in pen—no issues identified



Day 19 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

