

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Al Shuwaikh*

Sheep and cattle exported to Kuwait, Qatar and UAE in
November 2019

Report 200, April 2020

Voyage summary

A consignment of 67,688 sheep and 669 cattle for a single exporter was loaded onto the *MV Al Shuwaikh* at the Port of Fremantle between 12 and 14 November 2019. The vessel departed on 14 November 2019. The first discharge was at the Port of Shuwaikh, Kuwait, between 29 and 30 November 2019. The second discharge was at the Port of Hamad, Qatar, between 2 and 3 December 2019. The final discharge was at the Port of Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates (UAE), between 5 and 6 December 2019, making this a 25-day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for the sheep was 0.23% (156 mortalities), and for the cattle 0.29% (2 mortalities), which 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 are a summary of key observations and have 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

Fewer sheep were loaded than the original load plan. A plan was discussed at the first morning meeting how to best utilize this space and acted upon. Sheep in pens that seemed to have more sheep than adjacent pens were moved to other pens. The cattle were loaded according to the load plan. Final pen space allocation met the requirements as stated in the [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock \(Version 2.3\) 2011](#) (ASEL). No adverse impacts on animal welfare were observed during or as a result of loading.

Personnel

There was an experienced Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and a LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) on board responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage. The stockperson and AAV were both experienced in livestock export voyages, including previous voyages on this vessel. They were conscientious and professional.

The vessel's officers and livestock crew were experienced, and worked together to achieve good animal welfare outcomes, and a successful voyage. Relationships between the AAV, stockperson, observer, and officers and crew were excellent.

Daily routine

A management meeting was held daily at 10:00am between the Chief Officer (CO), bosun, stockperson and AAV.

Feeding was automated, with one feed in the early morning and the other in the late afternoon. For most of the livestock, this feeding schedule provided feed on offer 24 hours a day.

The livestock crew worked a ten-hour day between 7:00am and 18:00pm. The nightwatch comprised one crewmember working an 18:00pm to 21:00pm shift, then another working a 21:00pm to 7:00am shift. The nightwatchmen reported hourly to the bridge in person.

Feed and water

Pellets and chaff in excess of the ASEL requirements were loaded. The automated feed system contributed to 15% of the feed being broken down into dust ('fines'). Feed consumption during the voyage was higher than required by ASEL and no adverse impacts on animal welfare were observed.

Water was replenished via the float valves in the water troughs. The livestock crew maintained the water troughs in a clean condition.

There was enough free space in all pens for all stock to access feed and water on demand. No "pecking order" problems were seen that would keep those at the lower decks from reaching feed and water. Shy feeders were moved to hospital pens where they could consume adequate feed.

Ventilation

Enclosed Decks 1–4 were warm, humid, and had an ammonia smell. Deck 5, which is enclosed but the only single-tier deck, had improved air quality when compared to Decks 1–4.

The air quality on the open Decks 6–9 was variable and depended on the ocean breeze. There were many days when the breeze provided cross-ventilation over the open decks, and during these times the air quality was excellent. There were also days when the breeze matched the vessel's speed and direction, offering no additional air movement. On these days, the air quality on the open decks matched the closed decks.

There were no problems with the ventilation system. Heat stress scores for the majority of the sheep ranged from 0 to 1. On the days approaching and crossing the equator, there was a

minority of sheep on the border line between heat stress scores 1 and 2. The respiratory rate of the cattle was normal throughout the voyage.

The maximum dry bulb temperature was 32 °C, and maximum humidity was 85%.

Pen conditions

The pens were maintained in good to excellent condition throughout the voyage. Many of the sheep pads started out sticky, but evolved to dry and spongy. The sheep pads achieved a maximum depth of 8–10 centimetres.

Cattle pen conditions were generally sticky. Crew shovelled up and removed faeces that been pushed out into the alleyway. Cattle pads at the time of clean-up, again by shovelling, were never very deep and presented no welfare concerns. No deck wash-down was required.

Many of the horned rams could not get their heads through the rails to access feed and water because of the deck configuration. The livestock crew rectified this by placing water and feed troughs inside the pens. The largest of the horned rams were in pens with no upper tier, making monitoring and the crews work easier.

The stocking density and load plan were calculated accurately. There was enough space for all stock to lie down and rest at all times.

Health and welfare

The crew and stockperson worked well together identifying stock in need of hospitalisation and treatment. Stock in need of veterinary care were identified quickly, moved to hospital pens, and then given appropriate treatments. Of the sheep mortalities, 22 were euthanased due to either inanition, being a 'downer', or failure to respond to treatment for lameness. Other causes of death were primarily enteritis, inanition, and clostridial disease. The observer noted that shearing cut infections, and resulting lameness, contributed to approximately 20 of the 30 sheep hospitalised.

One of the 2 cattle mortalities was due to peritonitis subsequent to rupture of the rumen, and the other due to obstruction of the small intestine.

There were no other issues with the overall health and welfare of the livestock.

Discharge

Discharge in Qatar and the UAE was relatively slow due to a shortage of trucks. Livestock management at all three discharge ports was very good.

All livestock had access to clean water and fodder during discharge. No animal health or welfare issues were observed as a result of the discharge of the consignment.

Conclusion

The observer noted that the stockperson, the AAV and the vessel's crew ensured that high standards of health and welfare of the sheep and cattle were maintained during the voyage.

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

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 3 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 6 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 10 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 16 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 18 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

