

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Al Messilah*

Sheep and cattle exported to Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates in December 2018

Report 47, September 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 65,602 sheep and 312 cattle were loaded onto the *MV Al Messilah* at the Port of Fremantle on 4 and 5 December 2018. The vessel departed on 5 December 2018. The first discharge was in Kuwait on 19 and 20 December 2018, the second discharge was in Qatar on 22 and 23 December 2018, and the third discharge was in the UAE on 24 and 25 December 2018 making this a 22 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for sheep was 0.2% (130 mortalities) and there were no mortalities for the cattle.

The mortality rate for sheep does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure on behalf of the exporter.

The following comments represent a summary of the key observations from the observer. The summary has been approved by the observer who accompanied the voyage.

Exporter documentation

Exporter arrangements were available to address procedures relating to livestock management from loading through to discharge, including contingencies.

Implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of livestock

Loading

The observer noted that sufficient competent personnel were available at loading to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock. At all times, the livestock were treated with due regard for welfare. Feed and water were available in the pens and ventilation was running prior to loading. The stocking density required for sheep allowed each animal 17.5% more space than required by the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)).

During the voyage, all pens were seen to allow most if not all the animals to lie down simultaneously.

Personnel

An experienced Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) accompanied the consignment on the voyage. There was also an experienced LiveCorp Accredited Stock person (stockperson) who was diligent, hardworking and very concerned with animal welfare.

The master and Chief Officer (CO) were very knowledgeable, experienced and were seen to walk the decks regularly to monitor the crew. There were 22 crew delivering services to the livestock. The crew were hard working, knowledgeable and had animal welfare as their priority.

Daily routine

The livestock crew hours were 7:00am until 6:00pm with meal breaks. During that time the crew walked the decks monitoring food and water troughs.

The AAV, stockperson, master, CO and the observer walked the decks each morning from 7:30am until 9:45am. A meeting was held each day at 10.00am and involved the CO, AAV, stockperson and the observer.

Between 6:00pm and 7:00am, crew members worked four hour shifts on night watch duties. The crew constantly monitored the feed and water troughs for mishaps during the night.

Feed and water

The vessel has an efficient feeding system which delivers pellets throughout all decks. One part of Deck 6 is fed manually. Fodder was available almost continuously which resulted in no evidence of undue competition for the food. Trough space was considered adequate.

Water is continuously available via water troughs which have float valves. The troughs were regularly cleaned, and no issues were noted.

Ventilation

Ventilation is via a series of exhaust and supply ducts which provide or evacuate air from each deck. During the voyage, the master adjusted the supply and exhaust configuration to effectively reduce humidity in the lower decks.

The dry and wet bulb temperature were taken daily on each deck for inclusion in the daily report. The observer's temperature recordings were in line with the vessel measurements. The maximum temperatures were recorded on days 7, 8 and 9 and were around 32°C and 86% humidity.

Pen conditions

The sheep manure pads in each pen were monitored by all personnel. There was little variation during the voyage with pads generally described as 'OK' by the AAV and as 'mostly dry' by the observer. The pads around some of the exhaust fan ducts in the lower decks were described as moist. In response the master adjusted the exhaust system and the condition of the pads improved.

The cattle pads became deep more quickly than the sheep pads. The cattle pens were manually cleaned using shovels on Day 7 and resulted in good pad and pen conditions for the entire voyage.

Health and welfare

All animals were visually assessed for heat stress during the voyage using the panting score table. As the temperature and humidity increased in the early part of the voyage, the respiratory rate increased for most animals however no open mouth panting was observed. From day 10 the respiratory character appeared normal. At all times, the sheep had excellent appetites.

As the wet bulb temperature increased during the early part of the voyage, the respiratory rate increased for most animals. Maximum panting score was assessed as between normal with elevated respiratory rates to mild panting on days 7, 8 and 9. The wet bulb temperature decreased from Day 10 and pant scores reverted to normal.

The AAV walked the decks constantly checking pens for health and welfare issues, stocking density and ventilation issues. The sheep and cattle were inspected to enable timely identification and treatment of sick animals. The stockperson monitored the livestock in pens to identify poor doers, injuries or lameness and reviewed the stocking density and ventilation effectiveness. The AAV and stockperson displayed sound judgement regarding when to euthanise an animal and were competent in applying humane euthanasia procedures.

Most of the animals that were subject to post mortem were found with enterotoxaemia / pulpy kidney or pneumonia or inanition. None of the animals subjected to post mortem examination were seen to have signs consistent with heat stress.

Hospital pens were empty at the start of the voyage and had adequate capacity for the number of livestock on the voyage. Animals that required treatment for wounds or lameness were placed in hospital pens.

The stocking density and welfare of animals was considered adequate during the voyage. Shy feeders were identified and provided with ad lib access to food and water. When handling animals, the crew treated the livestock with care and respect.

Discharge

During discharge, water and fodder continued to be supplied to all livestock. Sawdust was used in the alleyways prior to and during unloading.

Conclusion

The stocking density and welfare of the livestock was considered satisfactory throughout the voyage. The supply of fodder and water was within ASEL guidelines and no issues were noted with the ventilation system.

The AAV and stockperson worked diligently to maintain health and welfare to a high standard. 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 Sheep in pens – no issues identified



Day 3 Cattle in pen – no issues identified



Day 6 Sheep in pen - no issues identified



Day 13 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 18 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 21 Cattle in pen – no issues identified

