

Independent Observer summary report on *MV Yangtze Fortune*

Sheep exported to Oman in May 2018

Report 4, January 2018

Voyage summary

The *Yangtze Fortune* was built in 2005 and used as a container ship before conversion to carry livestock in December 2015. The vessel has eight enclosed decks.

This voyage carried a single consignment for one exporter. The vessel commenced loading on 3 May 2018 in Fremantle and departed on 4 May 2018 with 15,326 sheep on board. Discharge was completed on 18 May 2018 in Muscat, Oman, making this an 18-day voyage.

The Independent Observer (IO) joined the vessel in Fremantle.

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.30 per cent (46 mortalities), which does not exceed the reportable mortality rate as stated in the [Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock \(Version 2.3\) 2011](#) (ASEL). 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 from the Independent Observer from loading in Fremantle until discharge in Muscat, Oman. The summary has been approved by the IO who accompanied this voyage.

Implementation of procedures to ensure the health and welfare of livestock

Exporter documentation

The exporter Heat Stress Risk Assessment (HSRA) was submitted to the department prior to departure as required.

Consignment Specific Export Plans (CSEPs) were available addressing procedures relating to provision of fodder, water, bedding, medication, humane destruction, livestock officer instructions from loading through to discharge and contingency plans. The instructions included in the CSEPs were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.

Loading

The health and welfare of all animals was maintained throughout the loading process. The sheep were made up of a variety of age groups and classes.

Wool length was observed to be consistent with the HSRA, and as per ASEL and importing country requirements.

When comparing the initial load plan and the HSRA on day 5, a minor discrepancy (three square metres) was identified. It was found the initial load plan used by the vessel and exporter to create the load plan used calculations according to cattle loading densities and not sheep densities. The exporter was communicated with and a sheep spacing load plan and final HSRA was prepared amending the spacing. The overall loading of the vessel was determined to be compliant. This did not cause major issues, however sheep needed to be moved around during the initial phase of the voyage.

Personnel

An Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and one LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) were on board responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage to completion of discharge.

The AAV was experienced on livestock vessels, completing a number of voyages with both cattle and sheep to the Middle East and Asia. The stockperson had extensive experience (over 20 years) on livestock vessels and is especially competent with sheep.

The vessel crew comprised of 33 people, including the Master of the vessel (master), Chief Officer (CO), a bosun and 12 dedicated livestock crew. The CO worked closely with the stockperson to determine the load plan and deck space.

Daily routine

Management meetings were held each morning with the master, CO, AAV, stockperson and bosun to discuss and review all aspects of stock management including the feeding regime, daily water calculations, hospital pen management and plans for discharge.

There were usually eight to twelve crew members feeding out twice a day. After feeding was completed, one crew member was assigned to each deck to clean water troughs and decks, and to check on the livestock. If any issues were identified, they would notify the stockperson or AAV to address the concerns.

A night watchperson was rostered on over two shifts between 6.00 pm and 6.00 am.

Feed and water

The quantity of fodder loaded for the voyage was well over ASEL requirements. Good quality pelletised fodder, along with super chop roughage and oats were loaded.

Fodder was fed ad lib initially, and then reduced to ASEL requirements during the latter stages of the voyage in order to conserve fodder. Troughs were of an inconsistent size due to pen design. To manage uneaten fodder, the crew would transfer uneaten feed to pens which had consumed all their ration.

Drinking water for the livestock is made on the vessel by two reverse osmosis units. Water quality and pressure was good throughout the whole voyage and the troughs cleaned and maintained on a daily basis. Maintenance of the watering system was required in the first three days of the voyage due to changing troughs from cattle to sheep height. Considering this, and after a number of leaks, the watering system was turned off at night at 7.00 pm and back on in

the morning at 7.00 am from day 1. When deck temperatures started to increase on day five, water was no longer turned off at night. However, after a major water leak affected three pens and alleyways on day 6, it was decided that from 9.00 pm, water would be turned off and on in two hour cycles until full crew were back on decks at 7.00 am. This regime was maintained for the remainder of the voyage with no issues identified with sheep accessing water, and limited pens affected by water spill or leaks.

Ventilation

Ventilation on the *Yangtze Fortune* is provided by two generators.

Temperatures and humidity increased daily once the vessel left Fremantle. Temperatures on decks ranged from 21 to 34 degrees, with an average temperature of 31 degrees Celsius; and humidity between 74 and 80 per cent, with an average of 78 per cent.

Temperatures were taken once a day just before the 10.00 am daily meeting. The IO requested the CO take some afternoon temperatures for comparison, which were provided and remained fairly consistent. The AAV and IO both took readings with hand held temperature devices in the pens. Most of the time, pen temperatures were about one degree less than the walk ways (where ship thermometers are placed) as ventilation is directed into the pens.

On day five, pant scores began changing and were observed to fluctuate depending on the time of day. The sheep which had a bit more wool were most likely to demonstrate this behaviour. Most sheep in the morning were fast panting with mouths closed, however in the afternoon one to two in every other pen were observed open mouth panting with elevated heads. The IO noted that as humidity increased the sheep became more affected by the heat.

Pen conditions

Sawdust bedding was provided for the voyage and put down in pens prior to loading commencing. On a number of occasions, water leaks or bilge drain overflow occurred and sawdust was laid to manage pen conditions. Clean up and maintenance was performed quickly by the crew.

During the early stages of the voyage pens were dry and dusty, with water used to reduce dust. As humidity increased later in the voyage, pads become moister and sawdust was applied to some pens to maintain integrity of the pads.

Health and welfare

The AAV determined which pens were used as hospital pens. This was due to certain pens making it easier to treat and isolate sheep. Hospital pens not being used had sheep moved into them to reduce stocking density.

Hospital pens were looked after and treatments administered by the AAV. Animals were moved to hospital pens depending on the nature of the ailment and treatment schedule required. Where movement to a hospital pen was not necessitated (e.g. minor lameness), treatments were performed in the stock pens.

On day 10, one ewe lambled twins. The lambs were euthanased humanely as agreed by the exporter and AAV as to how to handle any lambs prior to departure. This decision was based on the high temperatures expected in the feedlot post-discharge.

A small number of shy feeders and ill thrift cases were given free access to chaff and pellets, and given anti-inflammatories and antibiotics as required.

Euthanasia was performed by the AAV with a captive bolt gun and recorded in the daily reports.

Discharge

The unloading process in Oman maintained the health and welfare of animals. A couple of escapees on the wharf were caught and put onto the trucks.

Shade was put up over the ramp by the vessel crew, and this plan discussed between the stockperson and bosun during the daily meetings prior to berthing. Sawdust was placed on decks, in raceways and on ramps to improve footing for the sheep during discharge. A pilot sheep was selected at the beginning of the voyage and trained up to assist with discharge. The AAV, stockperson and two exporter representatives assisted discharge and monitored animal welfare and handling practices.

Temperatures during discharge were high (36 degrees Celsius), however humidity was low and all sheep coped with these temperatures and very few animals were observed with increased pant scores throughout discharge.

Hospital pens were discharged at the end of unloading and segregated in the trucks. The AAV went to the feedlot the next day to follow up and reported they were segregated from the others and doing well.

Other

All crew were hardworking and diligent with the care of the animals and always handled animals appropriately.

Conclusion

The IO determined that the relevant procedures relating to the management of livestock exported by sea were consistent with ASEL.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 4 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 6 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 8 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Day 12 Alley way—no issues identified



Day 12 Sheep in pen—individual panting



Day 13 Sheep in pen—no issues identified

