

# Independent Observer summary report on MV *Al Shuwaikh*

Sheep and cattle exported to Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates in December 2018 / January 2019

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Report 57, August 2019

## Voyage summary

The livestock (69,917 sheep and 312 cattle) were loaded on the MV *Al Shuwaikh* in Fremantle on 22 and 23 December 2018. The first discharge port was Kuwait between 7 and 9 January 2019. The second discharge was at Doha, Qatar on 10 and 11 January 2019. The final discharge was at Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates on 12 and 13 January 2019. The total voyage length was 23 days.

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

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.3% for sheep (211 mortalities) there were no mortalities in the cattle consignment.

The mortality rate does not exceed the reportable mortality level as stated in the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011 (ASEL)*. The cause of the mortalities was 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 final discharge at Jebel Ali, UAE. The summary has been approved by the observer who accompanied the voyage.

## Implementation of procedures to ensure health and welfare of livestock

### Exporter documentation

The exporter Heat Stress Risk Assessment (HSRA) and load plan was submitted to the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources prior to departure as required. Load plan calculations are based on the average weight of each breed/type being allocated to a particular deck and area based on the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* (ASEL). An additional space requirement for animals was imposed on the sheep consignment, which allowed each animal 17.5% extra space than that required under ASEL.

Exporter arrangements were available to address procedures relating to livestock management from loading through to discharge and contingencies. The exporter arrangements were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.

## **Loading**

The pen configuration was described as long races rather than small pens. The pen configuration made it more difficult to head count and identify unwell animals during the voyage, through the long races provided extra space and improved access to troughs.

The livestock were not strictly loaded in accordance with the initial load plan. Some livestock were redistributed during the first few days of the voyage and the final load plan accurately represented the pen distribution. The stocking densities appeared at least adequate and in some cases generous. The observer noted that more than 50% of animals were able to lie down at any particular time.

## **Personnel**

The MV *Al Shuwaikh* had an Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) on board who was diligent and hardworking. There was also a LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) on board with over 20 years experience in long haul voyages.

The master was seen on deck multiple times and assisted with the first cattle pen clean up. The master was well aware of animal management and welfare. The Chief Officer (CO) is highly experienced and competent in managing animal welfare issues and taking appropriate action in a timely manner. The bosun was similarly experienced and worked well with the AAV.

The crew had varying levels of livestock experience relating to identifying unwell animals but were fastidious in their deck maintenance, feeding and watering duties. The crew behaved in a respectful manner towards the livestock at all times. The lack of livestock handling by some of the crew was appropriately managed by the CO, bosun, stockperson and AAV.

## **Daily routine**

On each day of the voyage at approximately 10:00am, a meeting was held attended by the CO, bosun, AAV, stockperson, and observer to discuss mortalities, hospital cases, stocking densities, feed water issues.

Twice daily the AAV and stockperson went on rounds to inspect livestock, check conditions and behaviour of stock, identify shy feeders and check feed and water processes. Once rounds were completed, both the AAV and stockperson took an active role in other daily tasks.

One night watch person worked from 6:00pm to 7:00am. The duties included monitoring the conditions on all decks, notifying the bridge of any problems and recording temperatures every 4 hours. The AAV was available if needed at night.

## **Feed and water**

Two fodder tanks are positioned towards the front of the vessel. The troughs are gravity fed and the entire system was computerised and monitored using alarm checks.

Feed and water trough space was adequate. Some shy feeders were identified and moved to the hospital pens for additional care. Early on in the voyage, additional troughs were added to the cattle pens to prevent competition for feed and water.

All livestock were fed twice daily and the total amount fed was in excess of the ASEL requirement. The volume of water loaded and reverse osmosis capacity resulted in a generous

amount of water remaining on board. Water was supplied automatically to each trough via piping and regulated by a cock valve system. The crew worked to keep the water troughs meticulously clean.

### **Ventilation**

The ventilation system supplied fresh air to all decks and there were no faults with the ventilation system during the voyage.

The crew recorded temperature and humidity measurements every 4 hours on each deck. The highest temperature recorded on the decks was 32°C dry bulb with an 86% humidity.

### **Pen conditions**

No pen wash was performed due to the deck configuration on the MV *Al Shuwaikh*. The cattle deck was cleaned on two occasions by manually shovelling the pad into wheelbarrows and disposing of the manure. Sawdust was spread after cleaning. The cleaning methodology was effective. Minor issues with sheep pad in some pens were caused by water leaks and rainfall. A combination of repairs of leaks, relocation of some animal and sawdust were used to manage the pen condition.

### **Health and welfare**

The stockman and AAV performed morning and afternoon rounds to check mortalities, identify sick animals, check hospital animals, administer treatments or euthanasia, check pen and deck conditions. In addition the crew identified sick animals and moved them to the hospital pens. The officers (bosun and CO) walk the decks to check mortalities, sick animals and conditions and liaise with the AAV.

The sheep were loaded with additional 17.5% space above the ASEL. The sheep in the enclosed lower decks experienced higher temperatures and humidity compared to the upper decks. Respiratory rates increased as the ship approached the equator and remained elevated in the lower decks for longer than the open decks. Some panting was observed. For the warmest part of the voyage the average heat stress score was between 1 and 2.

There was a degree of inexperience in identifying unwell animals. Training was ongoing and the identification of unwell animals improved as the voyage progressed.

The AAV isolated and treated sheep with numerous cases of pink eye, abscesses, lameness and shy feeders with varying results. The causes of cattle treatments were 3 cases of mild lameness. The cattle were isolated in hospital pens for treatments.

There were 211 sheep mortalities during the voyage. The cause of mortalities include inanition, enteritis, pneumonia, septic arthritis, enterotoxaemia and injury.

One non-compliance was noted as a ewe lambbed on the first night at sea. The ewe and lamb were isolated and discharged in Kuwait.

### **Discharge**

During discharge in Kuwait and UAE, on a couple of occasions, the animal handling was more forceful than necessary by the wharf crew. The AAV intervened to modify the behaviour. Overall the discharge went smoothly but slowly.

## **Conclusion**

The stocking densities, feed and water and sawdust were compliant with the ASEL requirements. The AAV was efficient and thorough. The AAV, stockperson, officers provided leadership and acted with animal welfare as a priority. The crew treated the animals with a gentle manner and were fastidious with feed and water supply to animals. The observer had no areas of major concern. The observer considered the mortalities were not related to deficiencies in handling or management on the voyage.

## Representative photographs of the voyage

**Day 3 cattle in pen — no issues identified**



**Day 3 sheep in pen — no issues identified**



**Day 5 Sheep in pen — no issues identified**



**Day 9 Sheep in pen — no issues identified**



**Day 15 Sheep in pen — no issues identified**



**Day 18 cattle in pen — no issues identified**

