

Independent Observer summary report on MV *Al Shuwaikh*

Sheep and cattle exported to Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates in February 2019

Report 74, September 2019

Voyage summary

The *Al Shuwaikh* was loaded with 71,160 sheep and 311 cattle at Fremantle on 4 and 5 February 2019. The vessel departed on the evening of 5 February 2019. The first discharge was at Kuwait Port between 20 and 21 February, the second discharge at Qatar Port between 24 and 26 February 2019 and the third discharge at Jebel Ali Port, United Arab Emirates, on 27 February, making this a 24 day voyage.

The mortality rate for the sheep was 0.46% (329 mortalities), and there were no cattle mortalities. These do not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of these 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 (observer). The summary has been approved by the observer who accompanied the voyage.

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 and contingencies.

The exporter's Heat Stress Risk Assessment (HSRA) and load plan were submitted to the department prior to departure as required. An additional space requirement was imposed on the sheep consignment, which allowed each animal 17.5% extra space than required under *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (Version 2.3) 2011* ([ASEL](#)).

Loading

The vessel was loaded according to the load plan and adjustments were made during the first few days. No signs of animal welfare issues were observed at loading. Due to the reduction in stocking density for sheep, they were observed to lie down in pens at a rate of between 50 to 100% during the voyage. The cattle also had sufficient space and nearly all were seen to be lying down at times during the voyage.

Personnel

The on-board Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and the LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanying the livestock consignment have extensive experience on livestock voyages.

The master and Chief Officer (CO) are both experienced mariners. The master was observed on the decks daily and taking a real interest in the care of the livestock. The CO checked the livestock, observing the crew and communicating with the bosun as required. There were 29 crew allocated to care for the livestock.

Daily routine

A management meeting was held each day at 10:00am with the master, CO, AAV and stockperson and observer to discuss livestock feed and water consumption, deck conditions, treatments, mortalities and any issue from previous day.

The crew worked from 7:00am until 5:00pm. Two night watchpersons shared the night duties walking the decks checking for water leaks, empty troughs, sick animals or any other issue.

The AAV performed morning and afternoon rounds to assess the sheep and cattle and administer treatments. Post mortem inspections were conducted each morning before the daily management meeting. The stockperson began his rounds before feeding commenced in order to check for mortalities, pen conditions, feed and water troughs and communicating with the crew and the AAV. This procedure was repeated in the afternoon rounds.

Two crew were allocated to night watch duties which included walking the decks, checking for broken water lines, observing for sick animals and any other issue that arose.

Feed and water

The vessel feeding system delivered pellets to the feed troughs on all decks. Feed was supplied twice daily at approximately 8:00am and 3:00pm. On average there were 3 feed and 2 water troughs per pen. The crew emptied the finely ground pellets from troughs as required.

Water was supplied to each trough via poly pipe attached to the top of the water trough and was regulated by a cock valve system, troughs were cleaned twice daily.

There was enough space for the sheep and cattle to manoeuvre around the pens to access feed and water. No overcrowding or herd flock hierarchy issues were observed.

Ventilation

Ventilation was supplied by 56 supply and exhaust fans with fresh air being transported to a series of vertical pipes directing air through all decks of the vessel via vents into each of the sheep and cattle pens. No mechanical breakdowns were recorded during the voyage.

Pen conditions

The pad conditions for the sheep remained dry to firm throughout the voyage except during the first couple of days on deck 6 that was subject to some rain and ocean spray. These pens dried within 24 hours when the weather subsided.

The cattle pad conditions were also firm and were manually cleaned twice on days 7 and 13. Sawdust was placed in the pens after cleaning. Washing of cattle on Deck 5 was not performed due to the deck design and because there were sheep also on this deck. The cattle pens were cleaned using a shovel and wheelbarrow which was effective.

Health and welfare

Hospital pens were empty at the start of the voyage. They were used to hold unwell animals and one ewe that had lambed.

Weather conditions varied from 25°C at departure from Fremantle to 33°C with humidity at 86% and a wet bulb temperature of 31°C for approximately 4 days around the equator. Temperatures dropped to around 25°C when the vessel entered the Arabian Gulf.

During the warmest period of the journey respiratory rates were elevated but at no time were there any signs of open mouth breathing observed.

Treatments were administered to 20 sheep and 3 cattle for lameness. No mortalities were recorded for the cattle. Of the 329 sheep mortalities, the records of post mortem indicated that most died of inanition (shy feeders) and a small number of pneumonia and enteritis.

The livestock were observed to be in good condition when discharged.

Discharge

Discharge in the ports of Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates were incident free.

Conclusion

Overall the voyage went well with no signs of animal welfare issues observed from loading, sea voyage and discharge at the three ports in the Middle East. The stockperson and the AAV worked together well as a team.

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

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 5 Sheep in pen - no issues identified



Day 4 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 10 Cattle in pen - no issues identified



Day 10 Sheep in pen—no issues identified



Sheep in pen - no issues identified



Day 14 Sheep in pen—no issues identified

