

# Independent Observer summary report on *MV Al Shuwaikh*

Cattle and sheep exported to Kuwait and Qatar in  
March 2019

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Report 99, December 2019

## Voyage summary

A consignment of 70,250 sheep and 204 cattle were loaded onto the *MV Al Shuwaikh* at the Port of Fremantle between 18 and 19 March 2019. The vessel departed on 19 March 2019. The first discharge was at the Port of Kuwait, Kuwait between 2 and 3 April 2019. The second discharge was at the Port of Hamad, Qatar between 5 and 6 April 2019, making this a 20 day voyage.

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

The mortality rate for sheep was 0.27% (190 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of these mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure by the exporter.

There were no cattle mortalities on the voyage.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations and has been approved by the observer who accompanied this 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

All livestock were provided with feed and water as soon as possible after being loaded in accordance with the *Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock 2011 (version 2.3)* ([ASEL](#)) requirements, and were observed eating and drinking soon after being loaded.

There were no issues with the stocking density in the pens. Stocking adjustments were made to loosen off any pens that seem to be tighter than others once the animals had settled down. The cattle on Deck 5 appeared to be fairly tightly packed, but were loaded as per the load plan. During monitoring, almost all cattle could be seen laying down simultaneously in some individual pens. Fodder, equipment and bedding were not stored in pens and did not take up space allocated for livestock.

## **Personnel**

There was an Australian Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) on this voyage. The AAV had extensive experience and was responsible for the inspection, treatment and euthanasia of livestock, and daily reporting.

A LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) accompanied the consignment. The stockperson did not treat livestock, but liaised with the AAV to discuss any issues that arose during the voyage. The stockperson actively monitored animals in the hospital pens and discussed their condition with the AAV.

The Chief Officer (CO) was responsible for managing the rationing of feed, stocking movements, and coordinating feeding and cleaning times. They worked closely with the bosun to coordinate many of the activities of the crew and chaired the daily meetings. The bosun was also observed overseeing the activities of the crew on deck.

## **Daily routine**

The crew started their duties at 7:00am each morning when the automatic feeders started. They began by checking all the animals on their deck to look for sick and injured animals and mortalities which they removed promptly. The crew were most active between 7:00am and 10:00am, and their duties included trough and aisle cleaning, disposal of waste, identifying faulty water troughs, and transporting sick or injured animals to the hospital pens. There was a secondary feed usually at 3:00pm. There was always a crew member assigned to each deck between 7:00am and 6:00pm.

The daily management meetings took place at 10:00am and were attended by CO, stockperson, AAV and observer. Topics discussed included feeding, management of livestock, cleaning, numbers and location of mortalities, and weather conditions.

The night watch duties were split into two shifts with 1 night watchperson on each shift from 6:00pm to 7:00am. The observer noted there was always a night watchperson observed performing duties at these times.

## **Feed and water**

The observer noted that fodder was loaded in excess of the ASEL requirements. Feeding of pellets via an auger was performed twice daily, once at 7:00am and again usually at 3:00pm. The observer noted that the livestock had *ad lib* access to fodder. The crew ensured contamination was kept to a minimum, and the troughs were functional at all times.

Fines from pellets appeared excessive, were a constant issue and were very noticeable in the feed troughs. Sheep showed a preference to eat the solid pellets versus the powdery fines, but there was no clear deleterious effect on the animals. The vessel's management were aware of the issues and instructed the crew to empty excess fines into the pens.

Oats were introduced for 5 days to encourage sheep to adapt to the pellet diet. Later, oats were re-introduced to assist rams that the AAV had identified were not eating. Chaff was fed to cattle from the 20th of March and reduced once the cattle had adapted well to the pellets. Chaff was also given to sheep in the hospital pens.

Livestock had continuous access to potable drinking water and suitable feed throughout the voyage.

### **Ventilation**

Ventilation was observed to be operating at all times during the voyage and without incident.

Maximum dry bulb temperatures in the pens ranged from 27°C in Fremantle to 34°C when the vessel approached the equator. The wet bulb temperature reached a maximum of 31°C.

There were inconsistencies observed in the daily reports made by the AAV. Higher respiration rates were noted by the observer than those reported by the AAV, however, there were no issues with heat stress on this voyage. The issue with daily reporting has been raised with the exporter.

### **Pen conditions**

The pen conditions for both the sheep and cattle was maintained in acceptable condition. The condition of the pens was not observed to contribute to any systemic health issues, or related injuries, during the journey.

### **Health and welfare**

The AAV and stockperson were observed to regularly inspect the livestock. However, the practice was for sick and injured animals to be removed from the pens by the crew, and subsequently treated or euthanised, once each day in the morning. The observer noted that by removing sick and injured animals only every 24 hours, it also meant animals could be ill for a considerable time without treatment.

The observer noted that the AAV attempted to treat sheep which presented in a moribund state, or which lacked vitality and were laterally recumbent, and to give them every opportunity to recover. The sick animals would often die without being offered euthanasia. Typically, these animals had either enteritis or signs of not eating identified at post mortem inspection.

There were 190 mortalities for the sheep. The causes attributed to the mortalities included shy feeders, enteritis, pneumonia, trauma, autolysed and other. The AAV advised that the post mortems they recorded as “autolysed” were at an advanced stage in tissue breakdown making it difficult to properly determine an accurate cause of death. The only notable sheep morbidity issue was the higher than normal incidence of leg injuries although there was no evidence the condition of the deck posed any systemic health of feet/leg related injuries during the voyage. It was also observed that the very few sheep on-board the vessel with scabby mouth were not segregated, as required by the exporters Approved Export Plan.

Cattle remained healthy and injury free for the entire journey. No treatments were necessary.

### **Discharge**

No issues, related to animal health or welfare, were observed during discharge at the ports of Kuwait and Hamad.

## **Conclusion**

The observer noted there were opportunities for the exporter to improve the implementation of procedures related to daily reporting of conditions, segregation of animals with scabby mouth, and also the regular and immediate treatment of livestock.

The observer determined that the relevant procedures relating to the management of livestock exported by sea were, with a few exceptions, were consistent with the ASEL requirements and additional conditions of export.

## Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Sheep in pen—no issues



Day 5 Cattle in pen—no issues



Day 8 Sheep in pen—no issues



Day 12 Sheep in pen—no issues



Day 14 Sheep in pen—no issues



Day 16 Cattle in pen—no issues

