

Report: #10

Vessel: MV Bahijah

Independent Observer Summary Report

Sheep and Cattle exported to Israel in June 2018

November 2018

Voyage Summary

The MV Bahijah has a total of seven decks—four enclosed and three open—for the carriage of livestock.

The Bahijah commenced loading on 9 June 2018 in Fremantle and departed the following day carrying a consignment of 9 227 sheep and 3 695 head of cattle to Israel. The livestock were discharged in Haifa, Israel, on 30 June 2018. This constituted a journey of 22 days¹.

The Independent Observer (IO) joined the vessel in Fremantle on the day of departure.

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.18 per cent for sheep (17 mortalities), and 0.03 per cent for cattle (one mortality). The causes of the mortalities were not considered to be linked to any systemic failure on behalf of the exporter.

Comments regarding the implementation of procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock

- The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the IO from loading in Fremantle until discharge at the Port of Haifa, Israel. The summary has been approved by the IO who accompanied this voyage.
- 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 (Version 2.3) 2011* (ASEL). An additional space requirement for animals was imposed on the sheep consignment which allowed each animal 17.5 per cent extra space than that required under ASEL.
- The livestock were loaded in Fremantle without incident and the health and welfare of animals was maintained throughout the process. All animals were in acceptable body condition. Livestock were in general loaded onto the vessel in accordance with the load plan, noting constant adjustments were made through the journey to ensure livestock pen densities were satisfactory. Cattle with horns had been tipped, though some of the consignment had horns close to the ASEL limit, however were deemed not to be detrimental

¹ For the purpose of this report, the first day of the voyage is considered to be the first day of loading, and the last day of the voyage is considered to be the final day of discharge.

to welfare. There was a small percentage of sheep in the consignment (less than 2%) with wool in excess of the HSRA submitted to the department for this consignment. The IO did not observe anything that concerned them with respect to stocking density. More than half of the stock in any pen were able to be recumbent at any one time. As the voyage progressed more sheep remained recumbent, and often nearly all the sheep would be recumbent.

- Consignment specific export plans (CSEPs) were available to address procedures relating to provision of fodder, water, bedding (cattle only) medication, humane destruction, livestock officer instructions from loading through to discharge and contingencies. The instructions included in the CSEPs were observed to be implemented during the voyage and to be compliant with ASEL requirements.
- There was an experienced Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) and a LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) on board responsible for implementing the exporters' procedures to ensure the health and welfare of the livestock throughout the voyage. There was a lack of veterinary supplies noted a couple of days into the journey and drugs were not always stored in accordance with manufacturers specifications.
- The vessel's crew was led by an experienced Captain (Master) and a Chief Officer (CO) who between them inspected decks regularly in respect of feed, water, pen condition. There was a Bosun and stock crew who were assigned to duties on the seven livestock decks with at least two crew per deck. They looked after the supply and maintenance of the food and water troughs, cleaned the aisles and notified the stockperson/AAV of any issues. There was a night roster observed where one crew member each hour patrolled decks and reported to the bridge.
- The Master chaired daily meetings with the CO, AAV, stockperson, Bosun and the IO to review on board operations to ensure the health and welfare of animals. The IO assessed the crew to be mindful of the welfare of the animals when carrying out their tasks.
- Temperatures were recorded every four hours by the crew with a handheld device and averages were collated for the daily report. There were also wet/dry bulbs on each deck to observe real time temperature. The IO felt that given an average was being reported that this did not reflect the daily maximum temperature and humidity levels.
- All animals were fed at least twice daily in the morning and afternoon. Pellets were provided for both sheep and cattle, plus a ration of chaff was fed to all animals every second or third day. Pellets were fed in troughs and the trough space was adequate with all animals able to gain access. The feed troughs were maintained continuously by the designated crew.
- Water was generated by two reverse osmosis plants and delivered by an automatic ball-cock system. The troughs were rarely empty, and then only when the crew were in the act of cleaning the troughs or during small periods before plumbing issues were identified.
- The integrated forced ventilation system provided a directed air flow directly through the pens aided by a series of extraction fans. Smaller fans were also used to increase air flow in particular areas in times of individual supply breakdowns, which occurred twice on this voyage. There was adequate lighting of decks at all times.

- Sheep pens were generally in good condition with the pad base providing a cushion. It varied from dry to moist over the voyage. Very few reached the condition of moist and sticky and these were mostly observed in the aft section of Decks 6 and 7. Moist pen pads can result from a combination of increased ambient temperatures, increased drinking and urination or leaking water troughs. Continual maintenance of the water troughs virtually eliminated this source of wetting. However sea spray resulted in flooding at one point late in the journey on Deck 6 and these pens were vacated until their condition could be rectified. Wood shavings were available and spread over moist pens if necessary. The IO found that the health and welfare of the sheep was not compromised by the state of the pens.
- Cattle pens were maintained well through the journey with a well planned and executed washing regime. Sawdust was laid for presentation purposes after the final wash and subjectively the cattle benefited greatly from its application.
- The AAV, stockperson and the vessel's crew managed the health and welfare well, including the treatment of animals in hospital pens or humane euthanasia when required.
- The experience and commitment of the stockperson resulted in the early identification and care of shy feeders, for both sheep and cattle. This had a substantial impact in reducing morbidity and therefore ensured that many didn't become mortalities. There was a spike in pink eye cases early in the journey but most cases resolved by date of discharge.
- A degree of heat stress existed for the sheep on board the vessel from the equator until passage of the Suez Canal. There was a low level of discomfort and elevated respiratory rate of almost all sheep during this time. There was only one afternoon where this was observed to progress to open mouth panting and higher levels of heat stress existed across the ship.
- The conditions of discharge were very good, with animals not being without food and/or water for significant periods of time. There was an instance of poor animal handling by one of the importing country stock people when discharging the cattle which was swiftly, and professionally, addressed by the AAV.
- All officers on the vessel commented that the standards for transport by sea required for Australian livestock were the best for the livestock in their opinion.

Conclusion

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

The IO found that from the timing of loading to discharge, the processes, procedures and attention to the maintenance of pens and facilities was good. The Master, all the vessel's officers and crew were dedicated and diligent in performing their duties to ensure the well-being of the animals. The experienced AAV and stockperson worked well with the crew to maintain the health and welfare of the cattle and sheep in line with ASEL requirements.

The IO noted that a degree of heat stress occurred on part of the journey, and was unavoidable in the conditions. Cattle were under more heat stress in deteriorating pad conditions, and sheep were under more heat stress with increasing amounts of wool.

Day 1



Day 10



Day 19

