Independent Observer summary report on MV *Al Shuwaikh*

Sheep and cattle exported to Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates in June 2018

Report 7, May 2019

Voyage summary

The MV *Al Shuwaikh* was originally built in 1986 and converted to a livestock carrier in July 2000.

The vessel carried two consignments for two exporters. The first consignment loaded on 10 May 2018 in Adelaide before sailing to Fremantle to load the second consignment on 15 May 2018. The vessel departed Fremantle with a total of 69 117 sheep and 263 cattle. The animals were discharged at: Kuwait on 2-3 June, Qatar on 4 - 6 June and United Arab Emirates on 7 - 8 June. The total voyage length was 30-days.

The overall mortality rate for the voyage was 0.88 per cent for sheep (609 mortalities) and 0 per cent for cattle.

The following comments represent a summary of key observations from the IO from loading in Fremantle until final discharge at Jebel Ali, UAE. The summary has been approved by the IO who accompanied this 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 per cent extra space than that required under ASEL.

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.

Loading

The IO on board noted that the condition of the ship was good. The steel floor surface of pens and ramps were all in order. The ramp surfaces between the decks were covered with grating approximately 5cm deep allowing the animals to ascend without slipping.

Personnel

The vessel had an Australian Government Accredited Veterinarian (AAV) on board who had greater than eight years' experience in long haul voyages. There was also a LiveCorp Accredited Stockperson (stockperson) on board with 25 years' experience in long haul voyages.

The vessel crew consisted of 63 staff members. Of these, 40 were specifically deployed for servicing the livestock. Each livestock crew member had up to 10 years' experience. The Master and Chief Officer (CO) both trained on the *Al Shuwaikh* and therefore were very familiar with the vessel. The IO observed that all crew were kind when handling livestock. The CO was noted to be very diligent and encouraged crew to work to their full potential. The Master, CO, AAV and stockperson were all extremely proactive in mitigating potential risk.

Daily routine

All livestock were fed twice a day.

Night staff worked in two shifts: from 6 pm to 12 am, and 12 to 6 am. One crew member was responsible for monitoring decks one to five, while a second crew member monitored decks six to nine. The duties of these crew members was to monitor health and wellbeing of livestock and services.

Feed and water

All livestock were fed twice daily. The first feed commenced between 9am and 10am and the second between 3.20pm and 5.30pm.

Two fodder tanks are positioned towards the front of the vessel, one on the port side and the other on the starboard side. The entire system was computerised and controlled from a station room. The two systems can be operated individually (for example, one operating while the other is off). However, it is not possible to feed individual decks or holds separately, which prevents accurate data recording for consumption. The IO notes that the fodder troughs are well positioned, allowing the crew to clean and maintain them efficiently. Pellet fodder was loaded in excess of ASEL requirements. Lucerne hay and oaten chaff was made available to shy feeding cattle.

The IO notes that dusty pellet fines were consistently being presented to deck 6 and deck 1 in particular. The CO on board explained to the IO that the pellet had poor physical durability. In addition, the pellets had to travel an extended distance up, and then down through the system to reach deck 6 and deck 1 that are located on the bottom of each auger system. To maintain the pellet quality available to stock on these decks, the crew would remove the pellet fines from all troughs.

Earlier in the voyage, the IO observed crew using a modified spade to turn over fodder that had not been consumed in order to make the fodder more palatable before second feeding. However, towards the end of the voyage and during discharge, the fodder was not being turned over as

frequently. The IO noted that residual fodder present in the bottom of a number of feed troughs had solidified and turned mouldy. Fodder in this state was not palatable, or available for consumption to either sheep or cattle.

The watering system on board was efficient and well maintained. There are numerous fresh water tanks present within the hull of the vessel. Water is supplied to all livestock ad lib. The IO notes that the water troughs are well positioned, allowing effective and efficient cleaning by the crew. On one instance, the IO noted that due to rough seas, there was overflow of one of the ballast water tanks into a sheep pen. When the issue was raised with the CO, they immediately began to rectify the issue, organising a crew to clean the pen. The IO reviewed the issue 24 hours later and noted that the pen was drying well.

Ventilation

The ventilation configuration on board the vessel consists of two systems, one for open decks (6-9) and one for closed decks (1-5).

On approximately eight days of the voyage, the IO observed sheep open mouth breathing and attempting to gain position around the ventilation vents on all open and closed decks. This was more notable on hot days with higher humidity. In these instances, death by smothering was an observed outcome and six to eleven of the observed mortalities around the ventilation vents could have been attributed to smothering. This situation appeared to be more apparent in pens with higher density.

Pen conditions

Due to deck type and configuration, cattle pen cleaning is not by water wash down. Rather, crew manually shovel the pad into wheelbarrows and dispose of manure overboard. Whilst labour intensive, this cleaning methodology was effective and the cattle pens were maintained in an acceptable condition.

Health and welfare

Temperature and humidity readings were recorded every four hours during the day on each deck. Wet and dry bulb thermometers were well positioned along the aisles of each deck. The positioning gave an effective representation of the environmental conditions. The IO found that the closed holds had consistently higher temperatures and humidity than the open holds. The IO surmises that this may have been partly due to the oil fuel heaters being left on during the equator crossing. These oil fuel tanks were located against the walls of the closed holds. The oil fuel is heated in order for it to flow efficiently through the engines. When this concern was raised to the AAV, CO and Master, the heaters were immediately shut down and temperatures were significantly reduced within 48 hours. Deck nine was observed to contain livestock with consistently elevated respiratory rates. This was likely related to the dark coloured steel roof surface absorbing radiated heat from above.

The IO noted high standard of care for the livestock and explains that any issues were addressed in a timely manner.

Discharge

During discharge in Kuwait, the IO noted that the livestock were not supplied with fresh fodder for two sequential feedings (a period of approximately 30-32 hours). The IO noted this was the

only time the sheep were heard to vocalise loudly. Additionally, the IO noted a number of water troughs were fouled from manure accumulation in the upper tier overflowing and falling into the water troughs below. The crew attended to this issue, however the troughs were continually getting fouled towards the end of the voyage. The IO was informed that this was due to skeleton crew being allocated to routine husbandry practices. This is because during discharge, the crew are extremely busy with discharge responsibilities and staff are given time to sleep before all-night shifts.

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.

IO's on three subsequent voyages on board the *Al Shuwaikh* have not identified any further problems regarding the potential smothering, and this will be monitored on an on-going basis.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 5 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 5 Sheep in pen—no issues identified

Day 13 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 13 Sheep in pen—no issues identified

Day 23 Cattle in pen—no issues identified

Day 20 Sheep in pen—open mouth breathing