

Independent Observer summary report on MV Yangtze Harmony

Sheep exported to Oman in November 2018

Report 31, September 2019

Voyage summary

A consignment of 14 788 sheep was loaded onto the MV *Yangtze Harmony* at the Port of Fremantle on 9 November 2018. The sheep were unloaded at Muscat, Oman, on 24 November 2019 making this a 16 day voyage.

The mortality rate for sheep was 0.24% (36 mortalities). This does not exceed the reportable mortality rate. The causes of the 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) that accompanied the voyage. The summary has been approved by the observer 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 were submitted to the Department of Agriculture 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% 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

All pens were clearly labelled with the deck, pen number and pen area. Hospital pens were clearly marked and reserved for sheep segregated for treatment. During the first few days of the voyage, the stockperson and the Australian Authorised Veterinarian (AAV) redrafted the rams so that the rams could be provided with adequate trough access. Some gates between pens were removed to amalgamate two pens.

Personnel

The Master was very experienced and had overall responsibility for the vessel, all personnel and livestock. The command of the vessel was professional and at no time was there any restriction

on movement during the voyage. On most days, the chief officer was observed inspecting the sheep decks.

The crew included an experienced AAV that demonstrated a high level of knowledge in animal husbandry and welfare and commitment to accurate record keeping. The crew included a Livecorp Accredited Stock person (stockperson) who had lifelong exposure to sheep farming. The AAV and stockperson worked well together as with the vessel management and crew.

Each deck had at least one crew assigned to livestock duties, with the larger decks having more than one crew.

Daily routine

A daily meeting was held every day at 10.00am and involved the Master, Chief Officer (CO), stockperson, AAV, bosun and the observer.

The sheep were fed twice per day at 7.30am and 3.30pm. The bosun actively supervised the livestock crew throughout the day the CO was observed inspecting the conditions on the livestock decks. One night watch person was rostered on overnight duties.

Feed and water

After loading special arrangements were implemented to accommodate rams with horns to enable easy access to troughs.

The pelleted fodder was supplied to each deck via chutes and then manually fed into the troughs.

The supply of feed was the most significant challenge during the voyage. There was competition for the daily allowance of fodder. Sheep that were detected with loss of condition were segregated into the hospital pens with free access to fodder.

The AAV and stockperson was aware that a route diversion to avoid adverse conditions and delays in berthing at the destination port could cause an extended length of voyage. The AAV and stockperson considered these factors and the remaining fodder when deciding each daily sheep ration.

Water was produced by reverse osmosis and supplied to troughs that were fitted with floats to control the fill level. Most pens had multiple water points. The stockperson or AAV provided additional water troughs if there was not considered adequate trough space.

Early in the voyage the observer noted that the hygiene of some troughs was not satisfactory. The issue was referred to the stockperson and there was an immediate improvement and for most of the voyage the trough hygiene was acceptable. Towards the end of the trip the overnight maintenance of trough hygiene did deteriorate.

Ventilation

The ventilation system consists of 8 supply inlets and 8 exhaust outlets. The air is moved into the pens via large ducts with some smaller ducts covering pens on the sides and at corners. The observer noted that the flows from the supply ducts was universally forceful even at the terminal ends of the ducts.

Temperature readings were taken daily from each deck around 10.00am. The observer noted that there was little variation over the day and there was no major inconsistency between the temperature readings on the daily report and in situ thermometers.

Pen conditions

The pad conditions were dry throughout the voyage. Sawdust was used to dry up any trough leakage and preventing wetting the pad of adjoining pens.

Health and welfare

Thirty six mortalities were recorded with the majority attributed to enteritis and inanition. Other cause of death include sand impaction, urethral obstruction and pneumonia.

Treatments during the voyage included lameness, shy feeders / poor condition, foot abscess, facial eczema, shearing cuts and pink eye.

Sheep that were identified with loss of condition were placed in the hospital pens with ad lib fodder and chaff.

During the voyage, several crew members tethered a small number of sheep to use as leader sheep during discharge. At times the tethered sheep were without food and water.

Discharge

During the discharge of the sheep, the observer did not observe any incidences that represented poor animal welfare. However there were potential animal welfare issues with dilapidated offloading ramps and open gates on the backs of trucks. The AAV and stockperson were integral to the unloading process and the unloading process was efficient once it commenced. The sheep in poorer condition were unloaded last and segregated during road transport.

Conclusion

The AAV and stockperson worked together and demonstrated high level of knowledge in animal husbandry and welfare as evidenced by managing the appropriate feeding arrangements for the rams, managing the available fodder for the duration of the voyage in accordance with ASEL and appropriate management of the unloading process.

Representative photographs of the voyage

Day 2 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 3 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 6 Sheep in pen - no issues identified



Day 7 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 11 Sheep in pen – no issues identified



Day 13 Sheep in pen – no issues identified

