

24 October 2002

REVIEW OF MORTALITIES – M.V. AL SHUWAIKH V.21

1. Overview:

Rural Export & Trading (WA) Pty Ltd exported 74,740 sheep onboard the MV Al Shuwaikh V21. The vessel was loaded at Portland on 1/9/2002. The consignment was destined for Muscat, Bahrain, Kuwait and Dubai. The vessel completed discharge at Dubai on 24/9/2002. The total livestock mortalities at completion of discharge in Dubai were 2,304 (3.08%) sheep.

AQIS issued export certification for this voyage with additional conditions applied to the Export Permit via an AQIS Direction. The additional conditions applied to this voyage were:

1. An AQIS veterinary officer will oversee the final selection of the sheep for export.
2. A reduced stocking density by 15% for all sheep loaded, in accordance with the Saudi Live Export Program stocking density.
3. An AQIS approved veterinarian must accompany the voyage to monitor and address animal health, welfare and mortality issues – AQIS Canberra must approve the veterinarian selection prior to export.
4. The AQIS approved veterinarian must report daily to AQIS Canberra on Fax: 02) 6272 3110 on animal health, welfare and mortality issues, using the Saudi Live Export Program report template.

Even with the additional AQIS conditions applied to this voyage, the sheep mortalities experienced on this voyage reached 3.08%, which exceeds the 2% 'reportable level' as specified in the *Australian Maritime Safety Authority Marine Order – Part 43 (Section 40)*.

AQIS closely monitored the events of this voyage via the daily veterinarian reports. AQIS was advised of the final mortality rate on 26 September 2002 via the Master's Report – Carriage of Livestock, which was provided by AMSA via facsimile on 26/9/2002.

2. Scope of Investigation:

The investigation reviewed events that occurred during the voyage, including climatic conditions, to determine the cause of the sheep mortality rate in excess of legislative requirements. The investigation took into consideration the following documents:

- Master's Report - Carriage of Livestock
- Daily AQIS Approved Veterinary Reports and Final Voyage Report
- Written correspondence from Rural Export & Trading (WA) Pty Ltd
- AQIS Veterinary Officer Report on Voyage 21
- All correspondence received by AQIS from AMSA

3. Summary of Findings:

Export Company: Rural Export & Trading (WA) Pty Ltd
43 Ventnor Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005
Ph: 08) 9322 6649
Fax: 08) 9322 1240

Vessel: MV Al Shuwaikh
Voyage: 21

Livestock Loaded: Sheep 74,740

Ports Loaded: Portland (31/8/2002- 01/09/2002)

Port Discharged: Muscat (17/09/2002)
Bahrain (19/9/2002)
Kuwait (20-22/9/2002)
Dubai (24/09/2002)

Voyage length: 24 days – ex Portland

Climatic conditions: 15 Celsius / 59% humidity – 35 Celsius/ 92% humidity

Mortality Rate: 2,304 (3.08%)

Time of Mortality:	Days 1 – 17 (1,759 died – 76%)	2.35%
	Days 18 – 20 (279 died – 12%)	2.73%
	Days 21 – 23 (131 died – 6%)	2.90%
	Day 24 (135 died – 6%)	3.08%

Mortality Location: 1,759 (76%) sheep died between departure at Portland and first discharge at Muscat

4. Cause of Mortalities:

4.1. Daily Veterinary Reports and Final Voyage Report

The AQIS-approved veterinarian reported that the majority of deaths on the first 3 days were due to heavy weather conditions. From Day 4 onwards 90-95 % of mortalities were reported as being associated with diarrhoea and from 191 post mortem examinations that were undertaken, most probably salmonella associated. From Day 12, the veterinarian reported that inanition was starting to become a factor, but diarrhoea still accounted for the greatest majority of deaths.

The veterinarian reported that a low level blanket medication trial was initiated and continued for 10 days but results were inconclusive.

During the voyage the veterinarian collected numerous specimens, which are being returned with the vessel for further analysis at an AQIS approved laboratory, to determine the cause of the deaths.

It should be noted that temperatures experienced in the Middle East (Gulf area) did not significantly contribute to the mortality rate of the sheep.

4.2. Rural Export & Trading (WA) Pty Ltd

The company was requested to provide an explanation as to the level of mortality on board the Al Shuwaikh V21. The company provided a written report to AQIS on this issue after considering the Stockman's Report, the Master's Voyage Report and the Master's Report – Carriage of Livestock.

It was the company's opinion that the high mortality level was primarily due to salmonellosis. From the day of departure from Portland there was scouring and diarrhoea already occurring. The company also advised that there was some bad weather experienced in the Australian Bight that accounted for a few of the deaths between Portland and Fremantle.

After departure from Portland steps were taken to improve the comfort of the sheep, including ad-lib feeding and medication, although this did not significantly reduce the mortality rate of the sheep.

The report states that 'this company has not experienced a mortality exceeding 2% on a full loading ex-Fremantle since 1995'. This statement is incorrect based on information provided to AQIS by AMSA. Rural Export & Trading (WA) Pty Ltd has experienced 3 separate incidents with sheep mortalities in excess of 2% (July 2001 – 2.09%, August 2001 – 2.34% and September 2001 – 2.63%) when fully loaded ex-Fremantle to the Middle East, between December 2000 – December 2001.

4.3 AQIS Veterinary Officer Report on Voyage 21- Portland 1/9/02

The AQIS veterinary officer reported that as part of the additional conditions of this voyage, he was present to oversee the final sheep selection process. He reported 23 mortalities in the 3 days in the feedlot prior to departure. A total of 926 head were rejected on 31/8 and 1/9 (prior to export) for a variety of reasons including shy feeders, lameness, pinkeye and scours. The scours mentioned appeared to be minor and of a non-salmonella nature, however, salmonella scouring was noticed on the ship on 1/9/02 in some merino lambs and wethers prior to departure.

He reported that by abbreviating the feedlot period from 5 days to 3 days as was done in this instance, there is a danger that salmonella-associated scouring which tends to appear 5-7 days after feedlot arrival will first occurrence on the vessel rather than in the feedlot.

He reported that all interested parties agreed that the health and condition of these stock prior to departure were far superior to that turned out for previous voyages. He believed that the sheep looked comfortable in the pens with reduced stocking densities. He also made comment about feedlot practises and operation and believed there was need for significant improvements at the Portland feedlots, in particular the provision of shelter for animals being prepared for export.

4.4 Summary of Causal Factors

Based on the information provided, the following factors have been identified as contributing to the mortalities during the voyage:

1. High incidence of sheep scouring/salmonella like symptom
2. Inanition
3. Bad weather conditions in the Australian Bight (Portland to Fremantle).

5. Proposed Action by Company

For the Al Shuwaikh (V22), the following additional measures will be taken by the company:

1. Drafting at receipt is done by an independently contracted entity, CQMS.
2. There are daily inspections, observations and monitoring of cargo throughout the feedlot period.
3. Any scouring or suspect animals will be removed from the consignment.
4. Inspection during loading will be rigorous in order to identify any animals, which may pose a salmonella risk.
5. Accredited Australian stockman, David Lindsay will be on board the vessel.
6. Sheep are medicated in the feedlot prior to loading.
7. Loading the ship out of Fremantle where the feedlots are shedded and do not have a history of Salmonella to avoid the recurring problems of Portland.

6. The Next Voyage of the MV Al Shuwaikh V22

The next voyage of the MV Al Shuwaikh is scheduled to load in Fremantle only on 11 October 2002. The voyage is proposed to consist of 80,000 sheep, 300 cattle and 500 deer destined for discharge in Muscat, Bahrain, Kuwait and Dubai.

7. Proposed Action by AQIS

AQIS has assessed the following information in determining what action is to be taken by AQIS in relation to the next voyage of the AL Shuwaikh (V22):

- Report from the AQIS approved veterinarian on board the Al Shuwaikh (V21);
- Report by the AQIS certifying veterinary officer on the preparation of sheep in Portland for the Al Shuwaikh V21;
- Report from Rural Export & Trading (WA) Pty Ltd, including action to be taken by the exporter in preparing sheep for Al Shuwaikh (V22);
- The load port, cargo content and final destinations of the Al Shuwaikh (V22)
 - Load Port: Fremantle
 - Cargo: 80,000 sheep, 300 cattle and 500 deer
 - Destination: Muscat, Bahrain, Kuwait and Dubai
- The previous history of sheep exports out of Fremantle by Rural Export & Trading (WA) Pty Ltd (July 2001 – September 2002).

On consideration of all the information outlined above, AQIS proposes the following conditions be applied to the Al Shuwaikh (V22), in addition to the measures proposed by the exporter in Section 5 above:

1. An AQIS veterinary officer will oversee the final selection of sheep for export;
2. A reduced stocking density by 15% for all sheep loaded, in accordance with the Saudi Live Export Program stocking density;
3. An accredited stockman must accompany the voyage to monitor and address animal health, welfare and mortality issues.
4. The accredited stockman must report daily to AQIS Canberra on Fax: 02) 6272 3110 on animal health, welfare and mortality issues, using the Saudi Live Export Program report template. AQIS is to be advised at completion of final discharge.

8. Results of next voyage

V 22 departed Fremantle on 10 October 2002 with 68,641 sheep bound for Muscat, Bahrain, Kuwait and Jebel Ali, under additional conditions described in paragraph 7, prescribed in a Direction issued by AQIS under Order 10(c) of the Export Control (Animals) Orders.

The voyage was nearing completion on 24 October 2002. Mortalities at that stage were 1,188 head (1.73%).