

24 October 2002

REVIEW OF MORTALITIES – M.V CORMO EXPRESS V.84

1. Overview:

Fares Rural Co. Pty Ltd exported 52,485 sheep and 3,126 cattle onboard the MV Cormo Express V84. The vessel was loaded at Adelaide on 23/7/2002 and Fremantle on 29/7/2002. The consignment was destined for Jeddah and completed discharge at 0400 on 17/8/2002. The total livestock mortalities at completion of discharge were 1,064 (2.027%) sheep and 7 (0.22%) cattle.

The sheep mortality rate of 2.027% is in excess of the 1% mortality threshold specified in the Saudi Live Export Program (SLEP), which is given power via the *Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry (Live Sheep Exports to Saudi Arabia) Order 2000*, and the 2% 'reportable level' as specified in the *Australian Maritime Safety Authority Marine Order – Part 43 (Section 40)*.

AQIS was notified on the mortality rate by AMSA via e-mail on 22/8/2002.

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
- Veterinarian's Report – accompanied voyage
- Accredited Stockman's Report – accompanied voyage
- Written correspondence from – Fares Rural Co.
- All correspondence received by AMSA

The investigation also included a telephone interview on 4/9/2002.

3. Summary of Findings:

Export Company: Fares Rural Co. Pty Ltd
33 Phillimore Street
FREMANTLE WA 6160
Ph: 08) 9335 4444
Fax: 08) 9335 4600

Vessel: MV Cormo Express
Voyage: 84

Livestock Loaded: Sheep 52,485
Cattle 3,126

Ports Loaded: Adelaide (23/7/2002)
Fremantle (29/7/2002)

Port Discharged: Jeddah (15/8/2002 to 17/8/2002)

Voyage length: 26 days – ex Adelaide
20 days – ex Fremantle

Climatic conditions: 17 Celsius /49% humidity – 35 Celcius/70% humidity

Mortality Rate: Sheep 1,064 (2.027%)
Cattle 7 (0.22%)

Time of Mortality: Days 1 – 22 (415 died – 39%)
(Sheep) Days 23 – 26 (649 died – 61%)

4. Cause of Mortalities:

4.1. Accompanying Veterinarian

The accompanying veterinarian carried out 50 post mortems during the voyage and concluded:

Inanition (not eating)	Approx. 20%
Pneumonia	Approx. 5%
Smother	Approx. 50%
Enteritis	Approx. 15%
Trauma/other	Approx. 10%

The accompanying veterinarian stated that the most common reason for the mortalities on the trip was from smothering. This occurred in front of the feedlots at the two times per day that feeding occurred. This was most common in those pens where feeding occurred at the end of the feeding process and the feed was ‘sometimes not in adequate amounts’.

He stated that that conditions became ‘very hot and humid (up to 35 degrees and 80% humidity) once the vessel entered to the “Red Sea”. A greater number of mortalities occurred ‘in certain pens where ventilation was not so good and where manure underfoot was moist and boggy’.

In a telephone interview, it was confirmed that there was an engine malfunction, which delayed the arrival in Jeddah by about 24 hours. During the time of the engine malfunction all ventilation systems continued to work at capacity and all stock continued to be fed full rations. During the interview, it was confirmed that although the sheep did not have their feed ‘rationed’, the sheep could well have been provided with more feed as the feed provided did not satisfy the demand of the sheep. He confirmed that ad-lib feeding would be beneficial to the sheep onboard and allow the ‘shy feeders’ to better meet their feeding needs, which would possibly reduce the risk of smothering.

During the interview, it was also reiterated the need for improved ventilation on decks 4, 5 and 6, in particular, in the pens near the ramps on each deck and on the aft sides of these decks near the engine rooms. It was suggested that having portable fans, if the vessels ventilation systems would not better ventilate these areas, would improve conditions for the sheep.

The accompanying veterinarian recommended the following action be taken:

- 1) Either to increase the ventilation in certain areas of the Cormo Express (mainly decks 4, 5 and 6 where the mortalities were higher), or to decrease the stocking density slightly in the areas during the northern summer when extremes of heat and humidity may be encountered.
- 2) A small increase to the average ration received during the voyage may reduce some of the 'smother' deaths at feeding time.

4.2 Accredited Stockman

In the accredited stockman's report, little detail was provided but he did state that 'the sheep did quite well with very low mortalities until the Red Sea. After that because the temperatures and the humidity was quite high we lost more'.

4.3 Fares Rural Co.

Fares stated that up to 14/8/2002 (arrival in Jeddah), a total of 712 head had died and the remaining 352 died during time in port and or while discharging. Identifies the 'severe heat and humidity' in the Red Sea and while along side Jeddah port as the prime cause of death.

5. Proposed Action by Company

Fares Rural Co. Pty Ltd has proposed the following action to be taken to address the high mortality levels experienced on voyage 84:

- 1) Discuss with the shipowner what specifically can be done in the immediate, short and long term to improve ventilation on decks 5 and 6.
- 2) Identify the pens most affected on decks 5 and 6 and reduce the stocking densities in and around these areas by 500 head.
- 3) Arrange with the Master and accredited stockman to feed all sheep onboard three times per day.

6. The Next Voyage of the MV Cormo Express

The next voyage of the MV Cormo Express is scheduled to load in Adelaide on or about 6/9/2002 and Fremantle on 11/9/2002. The voyage will consist of 29,000 sheep and 1,500 cattle loaded in Adelaide and 24,500 sheep and 1,500 cattle being loaded in Fremantle. The vessel is scheduled to discharge all cargo in Jeddah on or about 30/9/2002.

7. Proposed Action by AQIS

On assessment of the information provided by the exporter, the approved veterinarian, AMSA and taking into consideration the livestock and destination of the next voyage, the following conditions are proposed for the next voyage of the MV Cormo Express:

1. An AQIS veterinary officer will oversee the final selection of sheep for export;
2. Consignment to be prepared in accordance with the Saudi Live Export Program (SLEP);
3. The AQIS approved veterinarian accompanying the voyage (as per SLEP), to provide daily reports to AQIS Canberra on Fax: 02) 6272 3110 on animal health, welfare and mortality issues, using the Saudi Live Export Program report template;

4. Sufficient feed supply to be provided for the equivalent of at least 3% body weight, plus an additional 3 days feed supply;
5. Ad-lib feeding of all sheep to be undertaken during the voyage;
6. Stocking density to be reduced on decks 4, 5 and 6 by 5%, over and above SLEP stocking density requirements;
7. Portable fans to be provided to improve ventilation for pens most affected on decks 4, 5 and 6 by ventilation problems.

8. Results of next voyage

V 85 departed Fremantle on 29 September with 64,500 sheep bound for Jeddah, under additional conditions described in paragraph 7, prescribed in Direction issued by AQIS under Order 10(c) of the Export Control (Animals) Orders.

The voyage was completed on 10 October 2002. Mortalities were 214 head (0.44%) whilst steaming, but 353 in the port of Jeddah for total mortalities of 567 (1.1%).