



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

FOI 2011/12-23

Dear 

Thank you for your email of 7 October 2011 seeking access under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) to information on the sheep unloaded from the *Al Messilah* and subsequently re-exported to the Middle East on the *Al Messilah* and *Al Shuwaikh*.

I note your request does not seek access to specific document(s) as is usual in FOI requests; rather it seeks a response to issues raised about the sheep from the *Al Messilah*. As such and as discussed with you, the scope of your request would need to be modified in order to be assessed under the FOI Act.

The following reply is provided in response to your correspondence. It has not been prepared as a formal response under the FOI Act. Once you have reviewed this reply to ensure its adequacy in addressing your request, I would appreciate confirmation from you that your FOI request can be closed.

You expressed concern that no mortality reports have been published by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) on its web site raised since August 2010. The department undertakes an investigation if the number of mortalities in a consignment of livestock is equal to, or higher than, the reportable level in the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL). Reportable mortality level means, in respect of any livestock species, the percentage or number listed below:

- Sheep and goats: 2 per cent
- Cattle and buffalo on voyages greater than or equal to ten days: 1 per cent
- Cattle and buffalo on voyages less than ten days: 0.5 per cent
- Camelids: 2 per cent
- Deer: 2 per cent.

The department's website is current, that is, no investigations have been required to be undertaken by the department for the period from August 2010 to 30 June 2011 as no voyages have recorded a level of mortalities that exceeds the reportable level during this period. The thirteenth Report to Parliament on Livestock Mortalities for Export by Sea for period 1 January to 30 June 2011 is

available on the department's web site at <http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/export-trade/mortalities/livestock-mortalities-exports-sea-20110101-20110630>

Regarding your request for information on the causes of death of the sheep that died on *Al Messilah* following its return to port on 12 August 2011, departmental records indicate the following reply was provided to you by email from Dean Merrilees on 6 October 2011.

I am advised that the total mortality count for the voyage was 298 sheep. This information will be tabled in parliament and published on the department's website, as per the standard practice for reporting the outcomes of sea voyages. The AQIS approved veterinarian on the vessel reported inanition as the main cause of mortality. Neither the mortality rate (0.44 per cent), nor the diagnosis, would be classified as 'notifiable incidents', under the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL).

In your latest request you have sought information on the number of mortalities and the causes of death for sheep unloaded from the *Al Messilah* that were subsequently re-exported on the *Al Shuwaikh* and the *Al Messilah*.

Before each consignment departed, DAFF veterinarians assessed the sheep and found them fit to travel. The sheep were healthy, well rested and fully adapted to the diet that they would receive on board the vessel. There was no basis to conclude that their delivery in the Middle East would be anything other than satisfactory. As an additional precaution, each consignment was subject to an additional fifteen percent space allowance above requirements under the ASEL. An AQIS accredited veterinarian (AAV) accompanied each consignment to report on the health and welfare of the sheep onboard the vessel.

The consignment of approximately 48 400 sheep re-exported from Adelaide on the *Al Shuwaikh* to the Middle East experienced 120 mortalities (0.25 per cent). The AAV on-board reported that these were mainly due to inanition though enteritis was a likely contributing factor.

The consignment of approximately 15 800 sheep re-exported on the *Al Messilah* to the Middle East experienced 86 mortalities (0.54 per cent). The AAV reported that these were due to enteritis, inanition and pneumonia.

The mortality rate for both consignments was below the reportable level of 2.0 per cent.

I trust this information is of assistance. Again I would appreciate confirmation from you that this reply concludes your FOI request. The Freedom of Information Coordinator can be contacted on telephone 02 6272 3933 or email foi@daff.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Cupit
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21 October 2011