



Wellard

MEDIA RELEASE
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Additional animal health safeguards to be applied on cattle shipments

Wellard Rural Exports welcomes the release of an Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) report into the reportable cattle mortality level on the voyage of the M/v Ocean Shearer from Fremantle to Egypt in February 2010.

The AQIS report found that pneumonia was the primary cause of cattle mortalities on the voyage, which resulted in a mortality rate of 1.79 per cent from the 16,460 cattle loaded.

As a result of the AQIS report and Wellard's own investigations, Wellard has made a number of changes to its procedures, including that all cattle sourced from Southern Australia to be exported by Wellard on voyages to the Middle East and Africa must be injected with a respiratory disease vaccine to prevent the reoccurrence of similar animal health issues.

Wellard Rural Exports Managing Director Steve Meerwald said Wellard began making changes to its procurement and management procedures and protocols as soon as the problem on the February voyage began to emerge.

"Wellard ships sheep and cattle from Australian ports on almost a weekly basis without incident, so the mortality rates we encountered on the February shipment were very disappointing," Mr Meerwald said.

"However, it was important to learn from the issues encountered on that voyage, so we made immediate changes to ensure it is not repeated and that our animal welfare outcomes continue to improve.

"AQIS have endorsed those changes and have required a number of additional measures for extended voyages to the Middle East and Africa, which Wellard has already adopted."

Those measures include:

- Vaccination of Southern cattle with a suitable product for bovine respiratory disease
- An additional accredited stockman is required to accompany the cattle
- Increased time period cattle must be resident in the registered premises immediately prior to export
- Loading of fodder and water to be completed prior to completion of loading of livestock

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- The provision of additional space for the cattle, over and above the ASEL requirements

Mr Meerwald said AQIS' investigations confirmed that livestock services on board the vessel functioned normally throughout the voyage.

This was supported by the results from subsequent voyages where the M/v Ocean Shearer carried:

- 226 cattle from Fremantle to Qatar and Pakistan with zero mortality (0.0 per cent);
- 6057 cattle from Fremantle to Saudi Arabia with 8 mortalities (0.13 per cent),
- 17,186 cattle from Townsville to Egypt with 14 mortalities (0.08 per cent).
- 18,071 cattle from Townsville/Broome to Egypt with 12 mortalities (0.07 per cent).

"These results are a more accurate reflection of the shipping results we achieve and expect," Mr Meerwald said.

Wellard informed both AQIS and the Australian Maritime Safety (AMSA) as soon as it became apparent the animal health issue was occurring on board the voyage.

"The vessel and the voyage have been subjected to extensive inspections and investigation by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service. Wellard has worked closely with both regulatory authorities throughout their investigations to ensure every last bit of information was made available so their reports were comprehensive and their findings were complete," Mr Meerwald said.

"Animal welfare has always been central to Wellard's management of the live export process. From the construction of new ships with superior feed, water and ventilation systems to the commissioning of independent animal welfare audits, animal welfare is at the heart of everything we do."

For further information please contact:

Cameron Morse

Phone: + 61 8 9386 1233

Mobile: +61 433 886 8714

Website: www.wellard.com.au

Background – Wellard Rural and Trading

Wellard Rural and Trading is the Wellard Group's agriculture and international trade division.

Its two largest subsidiaries are Wellard Rural Exports, Australia's largest livestock exporter and ship owner, and Wellard Agri, a mixed farming land owner and operator specialising in the production of grains, legumes and livestock.

Wellard Rural Exports has supplied quality Australian and New Zealand dairy and beef cattle and sheep and goats to the world for 30 years, and its investment in the live export industry is without peer. Based in Fremantle, the company's operations cover every aspect of the export chain, including feed milling, road transport, feedlot facilities throughout Australia and modern shipping.

The company's flagship carrier, the MV Ocean Drover (formerly the MV Becrux), is a purpose-built livestock carrier capable of carrying 75,000 sheep or 18,000 cattle from Australia to major markets around the globe. She was commissioned in 2002.

Its MV Ocean Shearer (formerly the MV Stella Deneb) can carry 125,000 sheep or 23,000 cattle, or a combination of both.

A new, technologically advanced, purpose-built vessel, the MV Ocean Swagman sailed on its maiden voyage in January 2010. The Swagman's sister ship, the MV Ocean Outback, is due for launch in late 2010. In August 2008 Wellard and Siba Ships announced a US\$250 million contract to build an additional two new livestock vessels which will be able to carry 17,000 cattle or 70,000 sheep or a combination of the two.

Wellard Agri owns and operates eight farms across three agri-hubs, two are located at Dongara and Watheroo in Western Australia's central midlands and one is located at Kojonup in the Great Southern region of WA.

The Dongara hub is home to The Grange, a 14,500 hectare property which is considered one of Western Australia's blue chip farming properties. It is primarily used for grazing, with some cropping.

The remaining landholding totals more than 18,000 hectares, of which 14,000 hectares is cropped to a variety of grains and legumes. The other 4000ha is devoted to sheep production, including the famous Hyfield Poll Merino stud at Kojonup.

In November 2009, Wellard Agri announced it was entering the farm machinery sector, when it commenced management of the CLAAS Harvest Centre at Katanning for the Landpower range of farm machinery.