



Date: Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October

Exposed: Hidden suffering of captive UK reindeer

National campaign group Animal Aid are calling on event organisers to halt the use of live captive reindeer in public events. This follows a comprehensive series of investigations they conducted which revealed:

- Deliberate animal abuse
- Poorly-looking reindeer on display (under bright lights and significant noise)
- Reindeer with raw, exposed skin, diarrhoea and skeletal abnormalities
- Reindeer being kept in highly unnatural conditions

Animal Aid filmed at three different reindeer centres from November 2017 and throughout 2018. The worst finding was at Kent Reindeer Centre. They were shocked to see a worker kick a reindeer on two different occasions as well as shouting abuse at these gentle creatures, revealed by footage taken on hidden cameras.

At Cheshire Reindeer Lodge they were faced with the pitiful sight of reindeer whose outdoor access appeared to consist of just a barren yard. Several animals had visible ribs.

Government figures revealed via a Freedom of Information request have revealed that reindeer kept in the UK perish from a range of generalised issues including parasitic, gastric and digestive issues, malnutrition, wasting and nervous conditions.

They have an innate desire to roam, and do so over vast stretches of the tundra. On captive reindeer farms they are afforded a fraction of that space. Government figures from 2014 to 2017, show that 571 reindeer were imported from Sweden, Finland and Norway. Once brought to the UK with its very different climate, they are susceptible to a variety of diseases and pathogens.

Reindeer are then used in festive grotto events, reindeer parades, and sadly some are dying prematurely. Animal Aid believes that some cases could be linked to exposure to diseases from British farmed animals. They are often subjected to an extensive travel regime, being transported up and down the country for such events.

Says Campaign Manager, Tor Bailey: *'Our investigations have revealed the shocking suffering of these gentle animals. Reindeer are sensitive wild animals, not props to be paraded around and used for human entertainment. I would urge the general public not to support events which feature live captive animals and find other more animal-friendly ways to enjoy the festive period.'*

#### Notes for Editors

##### General quotes (not specific to Animal Aid's investigation).

*'Reindeer are highly specialised Arctic deer. The recent fashion of keeping them in captive situations many degrees south of their normal range is fraught with health and welfare issues.'* - Dr. Aidan Foster, veterinary authority on reindeer.

*'Reindeer have adapted to live in the Arctic. They are not well able to cope with the stress of captivity, and most of the diseases we see here in reindeer are stress-related.'* Dr John Fletcher, founder of the Veterinary Reindeer Society.

- Reindeer are listed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The species has faced a 40 percent decline in population over the past 21 to 27 years.
- Animal Aid has a strict investigations policy which adheres to biosecurity measures, obtains access to premises without causing any damage to property and seeks to ensure that no stress is caused to animals at sites visited.
- Incidents have been reported to the relevant authorities.
- Photographs and investigative film available upon request.
- For more information please contact Tor Bailey:  
[Tor.b@animalaid.co.uk](mailto:Tor.b@animalaid.co.uk), 01732 364546 Ext 227