



HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL
UNITED KINGDOM



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS



Mahavir
Trust
REVERENCE
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As we approach the festive season, preparations for the Christmas celebrations will begin to take place throughout the UK. Sadly, a number of festive events will feature live reindeer despite the detrimental effects this will have on the animals' welfare.

We, the undersigned, urge venues and local authorities to cease using reindeer in their Christmas events, following the release of a new report that highlights the negative welfare impacts of these events on reindeer.

The new report, *The welfare needs of captive reindeer used for entertainment events in the UK: a review*, recommends that the use of reindeer in entertainment events is ceased, stating that the unnatural environments and lack of agency (the ability of an animal to make free choices or have control over aspects of their lives) associated with these events are likely to lead to psychological distress and a state of poor welfare.

The report, which explores the potential welfare issues of using reindeer in Christmas celebrations, outlines the following concerns:

- **The unnatural environment and lack of agency** associated with these events are likely to lead to distress and a state of poor welfare.
- **Lack of agency and exposure to unrelenting stressors** may lead to the development of learned helplessness.
- **The constant, unfamiliar and unpredictable interaction** with the public through petting and feeding has the potential to be stressful for reindeer.
- **The event environment presents a variety of stimuli that may be perceived as threats**, including loud noises, human 'predators' and other animals. While reindeer may express vigilance in response to these threats, they have limited agency to act upon them, thus leading to a state of fear.
- **Long distance travel**, repeated loading and unloading and pulling Santa's sleigh can cause physical and mental fatigue.
- **The stress of transportation and the event environment** can compromise immune system function, making them more susceptible to disease and infection.
- **During such events, reindeer have limited opportunities to undertake natural behavioural interactions** with the environment and other animals.

The report also highlights welfare concerns for reindeer kept in captivity. Dr Tayla Hammond, the author of the report, states that reindeer are harder to keep in captivity than other ruminants. She also highlights that for the past decade, veterinarians have voiced concern over the lack of suitability of reindeer for the type of domestication seen in the UK, particularly for those managed by private owners for use in entertainment shows, noting that poor body weight, weight loss, muscle atrophy and general malaise are commonly reported problems in captive reindeer.

We would urge venues and councils to cease using live reindeer in their Christmas events and for local authorities to cease granting permission for these events on council-owned land.

Yours sincerely,

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