

Name: _____

Reindeer Facts, Videos, and Questions

Reindeer Facts:

Reindeer are best known for pulling Santa's sleigh, flying all over the world on Christmas Eve to deliver presents to good boys and girls. But how much else do you know about Santa's amazing animal helpers?

- Reindeer, also called caribou, live in frigid tundra habitats near the north pole. *Reindeer* and *caribou* are just two names for the same animal. "Caribou" usually describes the wild ones that live in North America (Canada and Alaska). "Reindeer" is what they're called in Northern Europe and usually refers to the domesticated (not wild) ones, like those that pull sleds.
- Reindeer and caribou are a type of deer. But they're much more like their distant relatives, domestic cattle, when it comes to their names. Just like cattle, they have names like bull, cow, and calf instead of buck, doe, and fawn like their deer cousins.
- Reindeer are the only members of the deer family that have been widely domesticated (tamed). In addition to being used for pulling sleds, they have been farmed for their milk, fur, antlers, and meat.
- If you ask a reindeer to smile for a picture, you're going to get a rather goofy looking grin. They don't have any upper teeth in the front of their mouths. Reindeer only have teeth on the bottom of their mouths in the front. On the top, they have a very hard bony plate that helps them grind up their food.
- Sometimes Santa has to fly over water to deliver gifts. But he doesn't worry, because if they ever fall into water, reindeer know how to swim. In fact, reindeer are very strong swimmers. They can swim easily and quickly, at around 7 miles per hour. A migrating herd of reindeer will even swim across a large lake or broad river. So, Santa doesn't have to worry if any of his reindeer fall into the water.
- Both male and female reindeer grow antlers which are shed every year. This lets them grow new ones. A pair of reindeer antlers can weigh up to 30 pounds. While the antlers grow, they need a lot of nutrients. These are provided by a soft-looking covering that is called velvet. When the antlers have finished growing, the velvet dries and falls off.
- Since both male and female reindeer grow antlers, could Santa's reindeer be *either* male *or* female? Probably not. Male and female reindeer shed their antlers at different times of the year. The males shed theirs in late fall. The females keep theirs through the winter and shed them in the spring. So, if Santa's crew

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has antlers at the end of December for his big flight, then those must be lady reindeer pulling his sleigh.

- It's popular to set out carrots or apples for Santa's reindeer, but that's not what they like to eat. Reindeer are herbivores (plant eaters). What they really like to eat is reindeer moss, which is a type of lichen (say "lie-ken") found in the arctic tundra where reindeer live. Lichen is one of the few things that can grow in the arctic's constant frosty conditions.
- You may have heard the song about Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer that led Santa's sleigh through a snowstorm with his bright, shiny, red nose. Could there truly be a reindeer with a red nose? Yes, some reindeer actually have red noses! A group of blood vessels in their nose helps keep it from freezing in the cold. The blood vessels also warm the cold arctic air before it reaches the reindeer's lungs. These blood vessels make the reindeer's nose look red.

More Reindeer Facts Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqQLeH172Ho>

Coyote Peterson (baby reindeer):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3ty_Iogv9s&list=PLbfmhGxamZ83ool_nKe7kv03StlLjrYRR5&index=21

Use these words to fill in the blanks below:

tundra snow velvet migrate caribou hollow

1. New reindeer antlers are covered by a soft covering called _____.
2. Reindeer hoofs are spread wide-apart. This helps the reindeer walk on top of the _____. The hoofs are also _____ underneath. This means the reindeer can use them like a shovel to scoop up snow.
3. Wild reindeer are called _____.
4. Reindeer live in a really cold place called a _____. Snow covers the ground for most of the year and the ground is usually frozen. So few plants grow there.
5. In the winter, Reindeer _____ over very long distances to places that are warmer. They travel farther each year than any other land animal.