



ANIMAL ANTICS



REINDEER



The Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*) is described as a large deer in the order of Artiodactyl and classified as a ruminant mammal of the Cervidae family. Ruminant animals are even-toed, cud-chewing, hooved, usually horned mammals which have a stomach divided into four (occasionally three) compartments. Examples of ruminant mammals are cattle, sheep, goats, deer, and giraffes. Reindeer hooves are large and sharp enabling them to travel across large distances and areas consisting of snow and ice.

Reindeer are characterised by having deciduous antlers, which are borne by both male and female reindeer. Reindeer are also characterised by making long migrations, travelling further North during the summer months for fresh grazing and returning to the more temperate climates of the South in the winter for shelter. The Reindeer family also includes the elk, moose, caribou, and deer.

It is said that the origins of the word 'deer' comes from the Middle English word 'der' meaning beast and from the Old English word 'dor'. The origins of 'rein' comes from the Old Norse word 'hreinn'.

A male is referred to as a buck; a female is referred to as a doe. The sound they make is referred to as a bellow. Each reindeer makes a unique call. Reindeer are herbivores; they eat a wide variety of vegetation consisting of edible mushrooms, tough grasses and of course lichen (also known as reindeer moss). They often find food by scraping under snow with their hooves and antlers.

Male reindeer have inflatable pouches of skin under their throats. This amplifies the roar during the rutting season and with extra wide, splayed hooves it enables the reindeer to spread weight on soft snow to prevent them from sinking. They have unique hairs, which trap the air thus providing them with excellent insulation. These hairs also help keep them buoyant in the water. They are very strong swimmers and can move across wide rushing rivers and amazingly, even the frozen ice of the Arctic Ocean! These beautiful animals are also able to lie on snow without melting it or getting wet. During the cold winter months the reindeer have next to their skin a thick, woolly fur and during the summer, this fur thins out so the reindeer stays cool.



**“A PET IS FOR LIFE ...
NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS”**



A twist on the old adage, but it still holds true. If you're getting a pet this Christmas, please think very carefully. No matter how large or small the animal may be, it is a big undertaking and one to be given serious consideration. Although most people's intentions are good, unfortunately, some don't take into account the bigger picture of responsible pet ownership. You need to choose an animal that fits into your lifestyle and consider the commitment and financial implications for your pet's lifetime.

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