

Reindeer

P O R O





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REINDEER

(*Rangifer tarandus tarandus*)

- Weight: females 60–100 kg, males 90–180 kg, newborn calves 4–6 kg
- Length: 150–210 cm from the tail to the tip of the muzzle
- Height at the withers: 90–120 cm
- Tail: 10–15 cm
- Ear: 9–12 cm
- Foreleg: 55–56 cm
- Life expectancy: 18–20 years

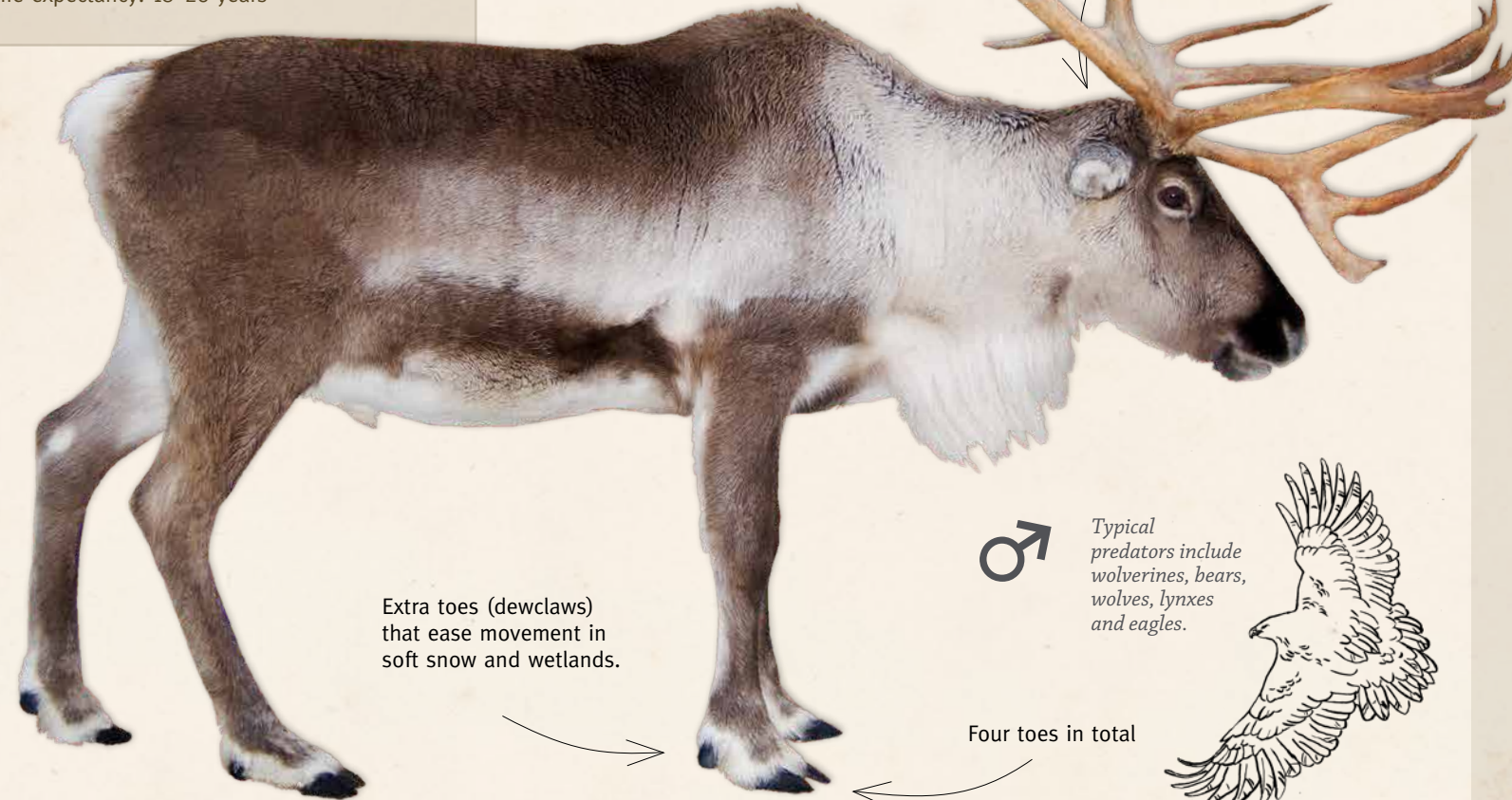
Coarse guard hair with heat-insulating air pockets. Extremely dense underfur. Able to withstand freezing temperatures and heatwaves.

Keen sense of hearing that enables fast reaction to sound.

Solid bone antlers, shed and regrown each year. The antlers grow up to 2 cm per day in summer. They determine their bearer's position in the herd. Males use their antlers to battle for females. The reindeer grows a larger pair of antlers every year until it starts to get old.



Reindeer in a feeding crater or 'kiekerö'



Extra toes (dewclaws) that ease movement in soft snow and wetlands.



Typical predators include wolverines, bears, wolves, lynxes and eagles.



Four toes in total

A REINDEER PASSED HERE



Droppings



Hoof marks

Females use their antlers to defend their calves and the craters they dig to find food.



Star-tipped reindeer lichen

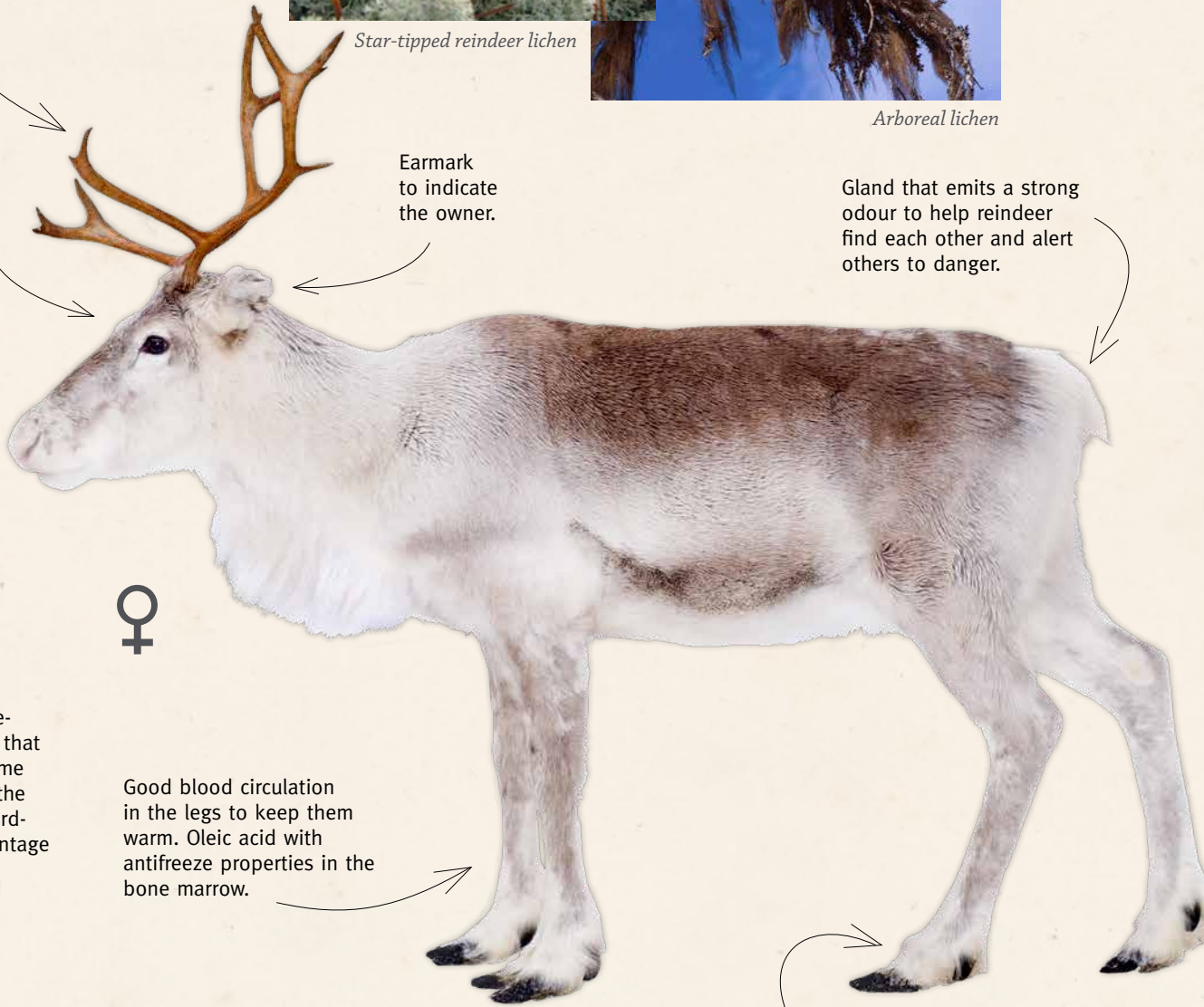


Arboreal lichen

The reindeer's diet consists of around 400 different plants. Their favourite foods include mushrooms and lichen.

SEMI-DOMESTICATED herd animal. Migrates long distances and moves a lot in search of food.

Eyes well adapted to the alternating seasons. The light-sensitive properties of the light-reflecting layer (tapetum lucidium) change with the seasons, and its colour also changes from golden in summer to deep blue in winter.



Earmark to indicate the owner.

Gland that emits a strong odour to help reindeer find each other and alert others to danger.

Great sense of smell. Able to smell food through thick snow.

♀

BELLS are often put on females or castrated males that faithfully return to the same places. The herd follows the sound of the bell, and herders use this to their advantage when gathering reindeer.

Good blood circulation in the legs to keep them warm. Oleic acid with antifreeze properties in the bone marrow.

Cloven hooves that click when the reindeer moves. The sound acts as a signal for the rest of the herd.



Musikki



Suivakko



Valkko



Moulting reindeer may look shaggy in summer.

Reindeer husbandry

The reindeer husbandry area covers 122,936 square kilometres or 36% of Finland's total area.

THE REINDEER HUSBANDRY AREA is an area legally demarcated for reindeer husbandry. Reindeer are allowed to graze freely in the area regardless of landownership. The rights and responsibilities related to reindeer husbandry are set in the Finnish Reindeer Husbandry Act.

In 1898, the state ordered reindeer owners to establish herding cooperatives with geographic boundaries. Each reindeer owner belongs to one cooperative.

The male is at his most handsome from August onward.

- 🔊 Around 200,000 live reindeer remain in the area after the reindeer intended for slaughter are selected in the round-ups.
- 🔊 The number slaughtered varies each year based on natural conditions and predators' effect on the population.





Fences prevent reindeer from wandering over national borders or into another cooperative.

Reindeer herding cooperatives

The reindeer husbandry area in Finland covers almost all of Lapland, as well as the northern parts of the North Ostrobothnia and Kainuu regions. The area is divided into herding cooperatives of different sizes.

EACH COOPERATIVE is run by a board chaired by the Chief of District, with the Vice-chief of District as vice-chair and four other members of the cooperative as board members. The board is selected for a three-year term. The Chief of District represents the cooperative and is responsible for its operations. All cooperatives belong to the Reindeer Herders' Association.

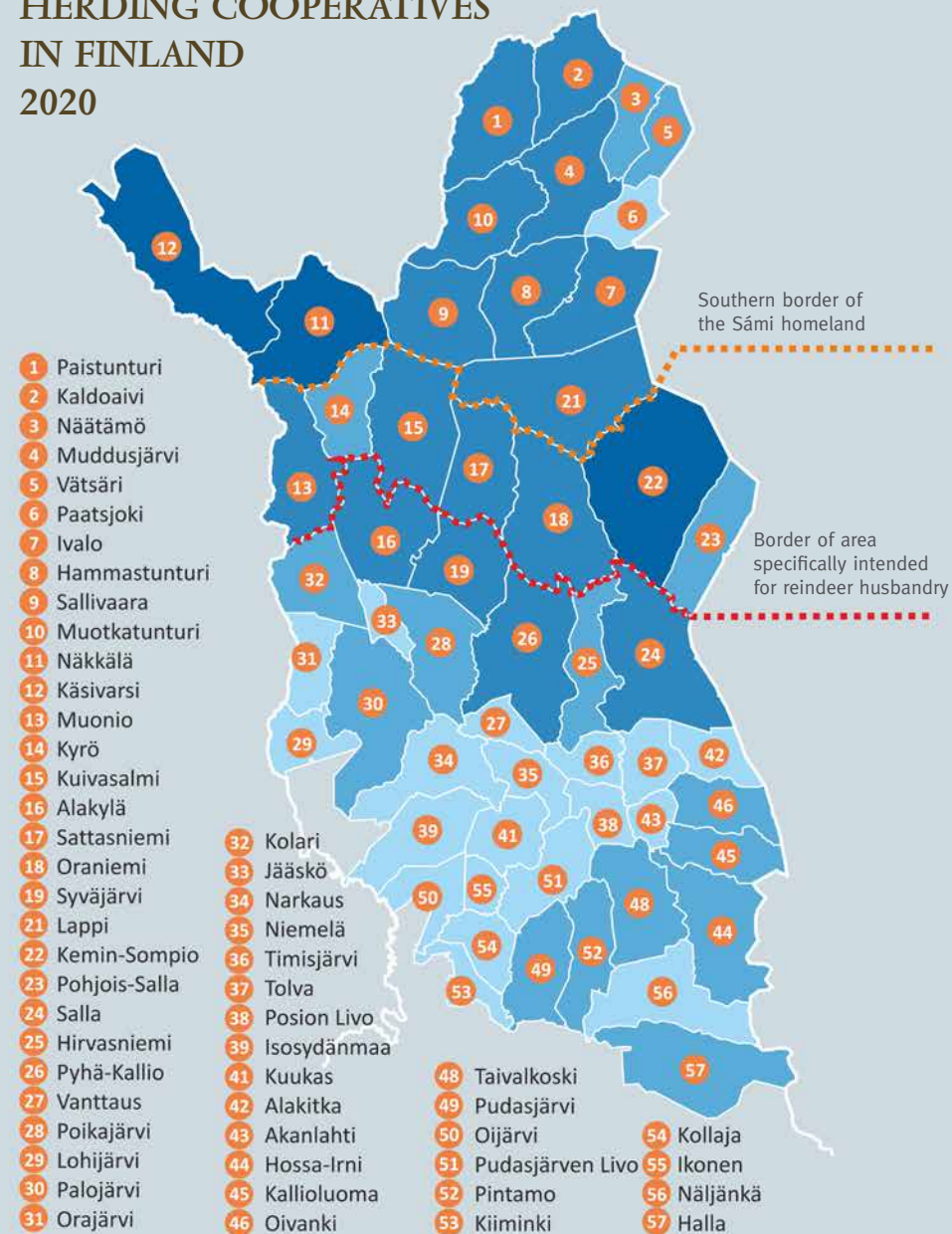


Round-up

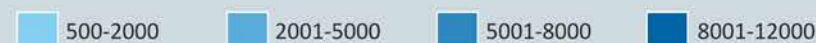
HERDING COOPERATIVES

- ☞ Regional and administrative reindeer husbandry units that vary in size.
- ☞ Tasks include tending to reindeer and carrying out herding work.
- ☞ Headed by a Chief of District.

HERDING COOPERATIVES IN FINLAND 2020



Maximum number of live reindeer in herding cooperatives





Reindeer Herders' Association

The Reindeer Herders' Association is a coordinating, advisory and expert body for reindeer husbandry.

THE REINDEER HERDERS' ASSOCIATION promotes reindeer husbandry and related research, provides advice on the industry, makes initiatives advancing the development of reindeer husbandry and the related industry, manages relations with the rest of society, maintains reindeer fences along national borders, approves new earmarks and keeps a register of existing earmarks. The Association is funded by the state.

THE GENERAL MEETING, 'THE REINDEER PARLIAMENT', IS THE HIGHEST DECISION-MAKING BODY

- Annual meetings in June, at the start of the reindeer herding year.
- Cooperatives represented by Chiefs of District.
- Elects a 14-member board for a three-year term. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Sámi Parliament each appoint one representative to the Board.
- Reviews documentation such as annual reports, plans of action and economic plans.

FOCUS AREAS

- *Minimising the negative effects of increasing industrial land use (such as forestry, mining and wind power) on reindeer herding.*
- *Advancing the health and wellbeing of reindeer by developing research and operations.*
- *Managing and reducing damage caused to reindeer by large carnivores.*
- *Improving the profitability of the industry through efforts to support production, products and the market.*

A UNIQUE FIELD RESEARCH HERD

The Reindeer Herders' Association maintains the Kutuharju field research herd in the village of Kaamanen, Inari. This research herd is unique in the world.





Building and maintaining reindeer fences in blockfields is hard work.

REINDEER FENCES ON STATE BORDERS

The reindeer husbandry area shares about 2,000 kilometres of national borders with three countries.

The total length of the reindeer fences on the Norwegian and Russian borders is 1,200 kilometres. The Reindeer Herders' Association employs 50 people in the areas of 20 different cooperatives to maintain the fences. The fencing on the national borders is meant to stop reindeer from wandering into other countries. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has tasked the Reindeer Herders' Association with maintaining and refurbishing the fences on the Norwegian and Russian borders.

Finland and Norway share the responsibility for maintaining the reindeer fences along their mutual border, while Finland is solely responsible for building and maintaining the fences on the Russian border.

Maintaining the fences in the changing northern conditions is a challenging task. Some fences are built over block-sized rocks in areas known as block fields. In winter, the fences may be covered by snow or broken by frost and snow piling up on the posts and fencing.



REINDEER HERDERS KEENLY DEVELOP THEIR LIVELIHOOD

Reindeer husbandry is the oldest livelihood that is still actively practised in Northern Finland. It keeps villages warm in areas where other jobs and sources of income are hard to come by.

In addition to the daily herding work, reindeer herders constantly develop their products and services. Small-scale reindeer meat processing and reindeer tourism have emerged as the main sources of income. Together with reindeer meat production, they form three solid pillars for maintaining and developing the livelihood. Making handicrafts, gift items and souvenirs and utilising different

reindeer by-products are also areas that constantly offer new opportunities.

Throughout its long history, reindeer husbandry has succeeded because of its versatility and ability to adapt to changing conditions.





The reindeer herder relies on traditional know-how

Reindeer herding is a profession based on understanding nature and adapting to it. The rhythm of life is set by the reindeer in harmony with the seasons, weather and grazing grounds. Children often get their own reindeer earmarks when they are still small.

IN FINLAND, reindeer may only be owned by citizens of the European Economic Area with permanent residence in the reindeer husbandry area, herding cooperatives, and the Reindeer Herders' Association. Cooperatives have a pre-emption right to buy any reindeer available for sale in their area.

The number of reindeer owned by a herder is considered private information, and there are many traditions and beliefs surrounding it. When asked, a herder will typically respond vaguely, for example with the phrase "on both sides of the tree". The occupational title 'poromies' is used for both men and women, even though 'mies' is Finnish for 'man'.

- ❶ At a maximum, one person may own 500 reindeer.
- ❷ There are around 4,400 reindeer owners in Finland, 40 % of them women.



A traditional 'suopunki' for catching reindeer



Reindeer husbandry originated from deer hunting

REINDEER WERE DOMESTICATED from the wild mountain reindeer native to Scandinavia. They were initially used to lure deer for hunting and to carry burdens. The reindeer provided meat, milk and raw materials for clothing and tools. This way, they supported some of the earliest human settlements in the northernmost parts of Finland.

Reindeer herding as it exists today began in the late Middle Ages. The Sámi started herding reindeer and travelling nomadically with their herds in the rhythm of the seasons. Finnish settlers also adopted reindeer herding early on and developed it further for their own needs.

The way reindeer husbandry is practised today is adapted to the local characteristics of each area, such as the terrain, settlements and natural conditions.



The reindeer herding year begins on 1 June

Reindeer husbandry is built around northern nature. The busiest times are earmarking the calves in June and July and the round-ups from the end of September to the midwinter months.

CALVES ARE EARMARKED IN SUMMER

The reindeer herding year begins at the start of June. Reindeer roam and graze freely in summer, avoiding swarms of blood-sucking insects. Their winter fur moults, and their antlers grow rapidly. In high summer, hordes of insects cause them to gather in larger herds in the fells and wetlands.

Herders make use of this natural phenomenon to bring the herds from the wild into enclosures for earmarking the calves. The reindeer are gathered by the means most suitable for the terrain: on foot, by ATV or by helicopter. Tracking technology is used to find the herds



more easily. Herders usually wait until evening or nightfall when the air cools down to begin the earmarking, as heat is exhausting for the reindeer.

Winter fur moults, making way for a thinner summer coat. The reindeer lubricates the tips of its growing antlers with the secretion from the glands in its hind legs.



Plastic tags or collars can be used as extra identifiers for reindeer.

HOW ARE CALVES EARMARKED?

- 1 Calves are caught in the enclosure by hand, with a suopunki or with a rod that has a noose at the end.
- 2 The calves are tagged with numbers and let loose to find their mothers.
- 3 The herders make a note of which earmarked mother each numbered calf follows.
- 4 The calves are caught again, and their ears are marked with the owner's earmark using a sharp knife.

EACH REINDEER OWNER has his or her own earmark. There are 21 different markings known as 'deeds' and around 12,000 earmarks currently in use. New earmarks are created when necessary. Earmarks are described starting from the tip of the right ear. The dominant deeds are described first, followed by the smaller deeds.

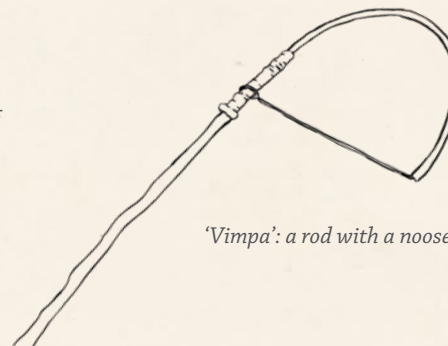


Right: 'pistel' above, 'hanka' below. Left: with 'haara', 'hanka' above and cut into the 'hanka'.



Right: 'limnunvarvas' ('bird's toe'). Left: 'terotus', 'pykälä' above, 'vastahanka' below.

Two earmarks and their descriptions.



'Vimpa': a rod with a noose at the end



Rising testosterone levels strengthen the males' neck muscles in the run-up to the rutting season. They are at their most handsome and ready for battle. It is best to avoid going close to reindeer at this time of year.

Autumn round-ups

The rutting or mating season begins in autumn. Males gather females in harems and watch them closely. As the males battle each other and their antlers clash, the females become sexually receptive. This results in relatively simultaneous calving in spring. After the rut, the males shed their antlers.

MALES COMPETING for females form their own harems which they guard jealously. Herders make use of this behaviour when gathering the reindeer for round-ups, usually starting in September or October. Depending on the terrain and natural conditions, the reindeer are rounded up on foot or by ATV, snowmobile or helicopter. Dogs are also used to help gather and herd the reindeer.



Reindeer like to eat on mushrooms.



The round-ups are the herders' harvest season.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A ROUND-UP?

- The reindeer are herded in small batches into the 'churn', where the reindeer for slaughter are separated from the livestock into smaller pens called 'offices'.
- The live reindeer are recorded and given antiparasitic medicine. Recording the reindeer processed at the round-up is also known as 'reading'.
- Each reindeer is caught, and its earmark is identified and reported to the 'reader' who records it in a list.
- Marks are cut in the fur over the reindeer's ribs to indicate that it has been read.
- The list contents are entered into the cooperative's reindeer register, which contains the number of reindeer owned by each herder and the cooperative itself.



Marks are cut in the reindeer's fur to show that it has been recorded in the reindeer register.



Herding reindeer in winter

Reindeer are well adapted to cold snowy conditions. The structure of their hooves helps them to move in the snow. Their legs do not freeze due to good blood circulation and oleic acid that acts as an antifreeze agent.

VERY DENSE winter fur enables reindeer to withstand freezing temperatures. When the wind is strong, they turn their backs to it in order to protect their heads which are covered by thinner fur.

In winter, reindeer can dig through more than one metre of snow for food. Their diet consists of 300–400 different plant species. Winter is a tough time for reindeer in the wild: they can lose up to 20 % of their weight compared to autumn. Herders look after their wellbeing in winter by feeding them when necessary.

In winter, reindeer are herded by many different methods. Snowmobiles and dogs can be used to manoeuvre the herds. Families or villages form herding communities to look after and herd their reindeer. Some cooperatives tend all their reindeer together. There are also herders who collect their reindeer in enclosures for the winter months. Reindeer herding practices are adapted to the natural conditions and land-use situation in each cooperative.



Spring – a calf on the snow on May Day

In spring, reindeer search for arboreal lichens in the forest by walking on the hard, icy snow. Calving most-ly happens in May.



A newborn calf

Dried reindeer meat is a treat eaten in early spring.



NEWBORN CALVES depend on their mother's milk. Brown fat and dense fur help the young calves to survive their first weeks of life. Their weight doubles over the first month, and their antlers start to grow in these early weeks. The mothers shed their antlers soon after their calves are born.

Spring is also the time for making dried reindeer meat. The meat is salted and hung out in the open air on a wall, on the roof or under the eaves. It is protected by netting and left to dry in the sun and cold air. Dried meat keeps well, which makes it an excellent snack for a journey or hike, for example. This method works only in the northern climate.

Reindeer as a healthy and nutritious food



REINDEER MEAT is fine-textured, which makes it tender, quick to cook and easy to digest. The back fat that accumulates under the reindeer's skin, known as 'pinta' in Finnish, can be used for cooking and frying. In addition to the meat, the reindeer's heart, liver, kidneys, tongue, fat, blood and milk are also highly nutritious. The most valuable cuts of reindeer meat are the fillets and the haunch (roast or round cuts). Fillets make for delicious steak dishes. Topside is the best choice for cold smoking. Silverside, thick flank, shoulder and chuck are good cuts for sautéed reindeer. All cuts can also be used to make traditional dried reindeer.

Reindeer milk is thick and creamy. In the old days, it was used for drinking and making cheese and butter. It contains up to three times as much energy as cow's milk. Nowadays, it is rarely consumed as food or drink. Instead, it is used as a raw material in cosmetics, for example.

Most reindeer slaughtered in Finland are calves that have lived their whole lives

eating food they find in the wild. In addition to stores, reindeer meat can also be bought directly from reindeer owners. The best time for buying meat is in October or November at the height of the round-up season.

The European Union has granted a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) to reindeer meat from Lapland ('Lapin Poron liha'), dried reindeer meat from Lapland ('Lapin Poron kuivaliha') and cold-smoked reindeer meat from Lapland ('Lapin Poron kylmäsavuliha'). PDO status brings added value to traditional products.

REINDEER MEAT IS HEALTHY

- 🍖 Low in fat
- 🍖 Good fatty acid composition
- 🍖 Rich in proteins
- 🍖 Plenty of vitamins, minerals and trace elements



Reindeer as an experience

THE REINDEER is Lapland's most famous brand and a major pull factor for tourists. Tourism offers plenty of opportunities for reindeer owners. Reindeer-related activities have become a key economic aspect for the livelihood. Reindeer owners also gain extra income by making and selling handicrafts, souvenirs or materials used in making them. Furthermore, tourism has increased the demand for reindeer meat and its supply in restaurants.

Reindeer races held in early spring have a long-standing tradition. It takes a lot of time and patience to train a male reindeer for racing. The season culminates in the Reindeer Championships. The races are organised by the registered association of racers, as well as local associations.





Reindeer as clothing

REINDEER FUR is different on each part of the parts of the animal's body, so there are many uses for it, so there are many uses for it. For example, the skin on the legs is used for making footwear because of its resistance to wear and tear.

The hide can be dried on a wall outside. As the fat on its surface dries, it becomes waterproof. These whole hides are tradi-

tionally used as bedding, for example in a lean-to in the wild or a 'lavvu' (tent-like dwelling). Hides can be tanned naturally with bark, for example with willow bark, to make bark-tanned leather known as 'sisna'. By industrial methods, reindeer hides can also be worked into soft nappa leather or smooth, lightweight suede, as well as materials for souvenirs and interior decorations.

Fur boots can be lined with dried and softened sedge.

A WIDE RANGE OF HANDICRAFT MATERIALS

- ❶ Leg skins for fur boots, headwear, mittens and gaiters
- ❷ Skull skins for fur boots
- ❸ 'Sisna' leather for anoraks, trousers, backpacks and bags
- ❹ Hoof tips and bones for jewellery
- ❺ Antlers for 'suopunki' toggles and handle decorations for knives or traditional 'kuksa' wooden cups
- ❻ Sinew as thread for sewing leather work

Sinew thread and reindeer leather thimbles.



Mittens made of leg skins.



Reindeer husbandry as a living culture

Reindeer husbandry is a traditional livelihood based on nature, passed from generation to generation. It is a way of life for herders and their families. It helps to maintain the Sámi language and the unique historical reindeer culture of the Sámi and Finns in the north of the country.

THE VOCABULARY used to describe reindeer and natural conditions is extensive. Words originating from reindeer husbandry are used in everyday speech. There are also many common expressions related to reindeer. One such phrase is 'poronkusema' ('reindeer pee'). It refers to the distance a

reindeer can walk or run before stopping to urinate: around seven kilometres. The saying "the reindeer teaches" means that life does not always work out according to plan. Artists from the north have also featured reindeer in their work through the ages, both as a material or theme.

Rock carvings found in Alta, Northern Norway, date back thousands of years. They show reindeer or deer in hunting enclosures, as well as bears and elk.

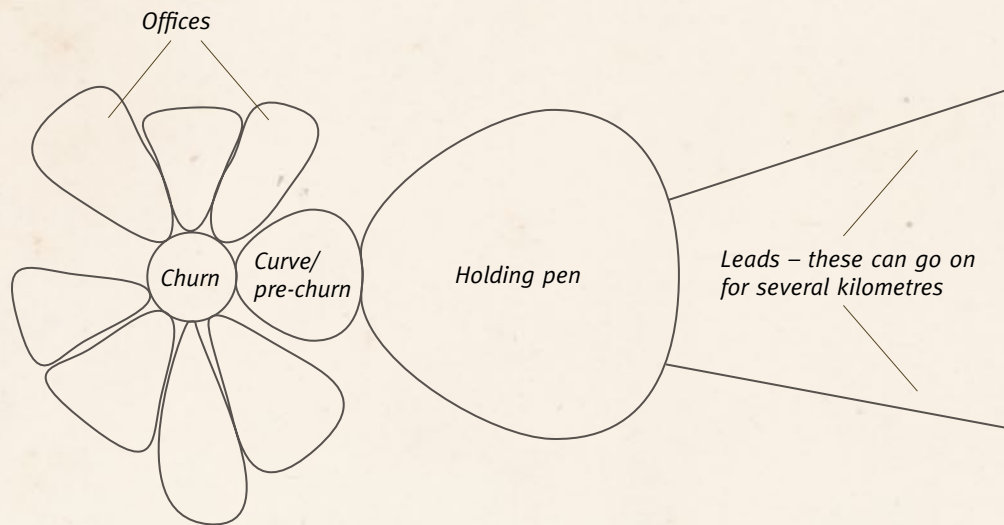




Round-up enclosure



Harnesses



The leads are used to guide the reindeer into the holding pen. The picture shows the different parts of a round-up enclosure. Herders in different areas may also use different names for each part of the enclosure.

Reindeer glossary

Elo a large herd of reindeer livestock

Etto gathering reindeer for the round-up

Hirvas a male over three years old

Härkä 'bull', a castrated male

Jotos, rannio a track trodden by reindeer in thick snow

Jutaaminen travelling nomadically with reindeer

Kalppinokka a reindeer with a white muzzle

Keloa to rub the skin off new antlers

Kirnu 'churn', a pen where reindeer are separated

Konttori 'office', a small side pen of a round-up enclosure

Kopara a reindeer hoof

Kosate a reindeer in its fifth year

Kulvakko a male exhausted by the rutting season

Kunteus a reindeer in its fourth year

Luostakka a white-sided reindeer

Maakkana a reindeer in its sixth year

Musikki a dark-coloured reindeer

Naamasarvet growing antlers covered in skin

Nimiloppu a reindeer from its seventh year onward

Nulppo a reindeer with no antlers

Palkia (of a reindeer) to move on the grazing grounds

Parttio a small herd of reindeer

Peura 'deer', a reindeer with no earmark

Raavas a fully-grown reindeer

Rooki a reindeer with dappled, light-coloured fur

Roukua to make a noise typical of reindeer

Rusakka a reindeer with brown, yellowish fur

Rykimä the rutting or mating season

Räkkä swarms of blood-sucking insects

Taamo to train, to tame

Takkahärkä a castrated male used to carry burdens

Tokka a large herd of reindeer

Urakka a male in its second year

Vaadin a female over three years old

Valkko a white reindeer

Veiti scattered reindeer

Vuonelo a female in its second year

Vuorso a reindeer in its third year

