

Learn About Reindeer



by

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Homeschool**
Homeschooling with a Fire for Literature



Reindeer can be found in and near the Arctic Circle, in the northernmost countries of the world. They inhabit the Arctic tundra in Russia, Northern China, Alaska, and Scandinavia. They are members of the deer family and are also known as caribou.



Reindeer antlers are second in size only to moose. The antlers can reach up to 4 feet in width. Both males and females have antlers. Reindeer use them to push snow away so they can get to the grass underneath it. The males use their antlers to fight other males. Both

genders use the antlers as protection against predators such as wolves, bears, and wolverines. Older males shed their antlers in December, while younger males shed theirs in the spring. Females don't shed their antlers until early summer, after they've given birth to their offspring. When the antlers begin to grow back, the reindeer is said to be "in velvet." This is a time when the new antlers are covered in skin, blood vessels, and a soft fur that resembles velvet. Reindeer bodies grow to be about 4 feet tall and 6 feet long. An adult male can weigh up to 460 pounds. The female usually weighs 170 to 260 pounds.



Reindeer are herbivores which means they only eat plants and grass. During the summer, they eat grasses, herbs, and leaves. In the winter they eat a type of moss known as reindeer moss. Some biologists have noted that reindeer will also eat eggs, small fish, and even small animals when the pickings are lean. An adult reindeer can eat about 12 pounds of food a day. With a steady diet, reindeer live 10 to 15 years in the wild.

A male reindeer is called a buck, and a female is called a doe. Baby reindeer are called fawns. They live in herds, which can migrate as far as 3,000 miles in a year. A herd can travel 12 to 34 miles in a day looking for food. They run up to 50 miles per hour and swim well. They mate in the fall, and the doe usually gives birth to one or two calves between May and June. The fawns grow very quickly in order to keep up with the herd.

Reindeer stay warm in their frigid environment with two thick layers of brown fur, which cover them from their nose to their feet. The outer layer of fur is hollow, like a polar bear's, to protect the body from extreme temperatures. In the winter, their facial hair grows over their mouths to protect their lips from the snow with which they come into contact while grazing. Their wide hooves spread apart as they walk on the snow, working like snow shoes to keep them from sinking into the snow. Their feet have four toes: two small dew claws and two large toes. In winter, these toes become hard in order to cut through the ice and keep the reindeer from slipping.



Humans hunt and herd reindeer as a source of food and to use their hides for clothing. In fact, reindeer were one of the first animals to be domesticated by humans. People in Siberia (northern Russia) have been using reindeer to pull sleighs for over 7,000 years. They even ride them like horses! In Alaska, reindeer were once used to deliver the mail. In Finland and Norway they are often kept as pets, and there are over 400 words related to reindeer in the Scandinavian language.



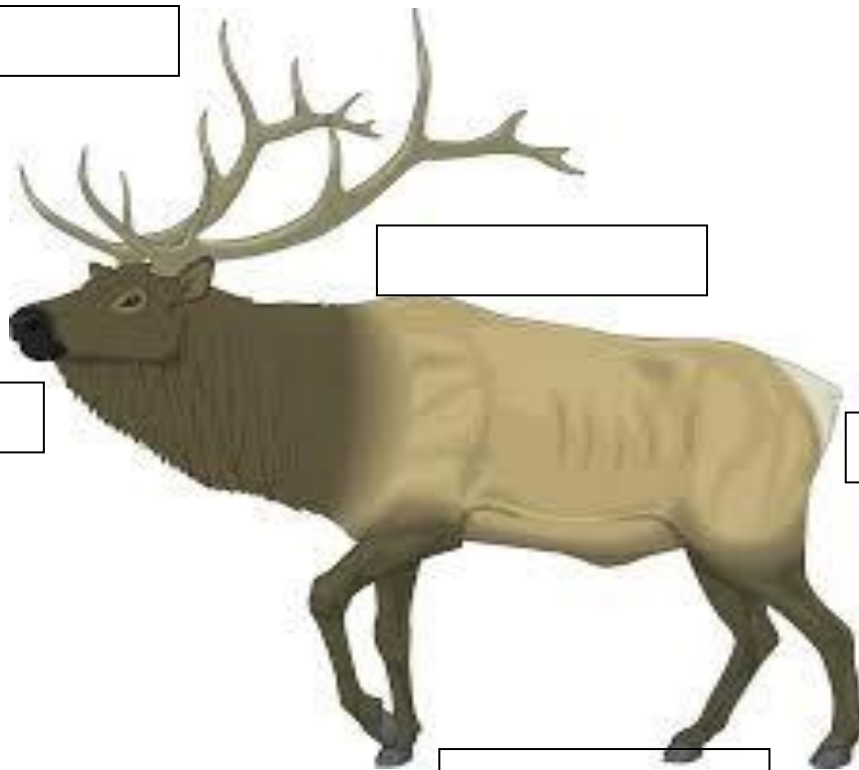
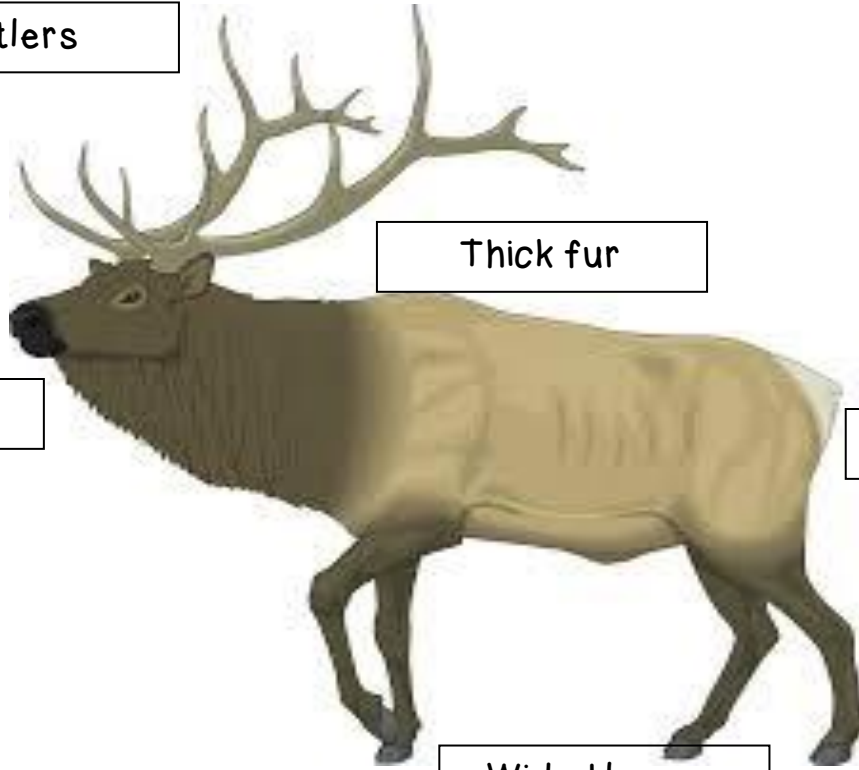
Antlers

Thick fur

Muzzle

Tail

Wide Hooves



Reindeer Food

Your littles will love putting this 'reindeer food' out for Santa's coursers on Christmas Eve.

What you need:

A baby food (or some other small) jar

½ cup oatmeal

A tablespoon or 2 of red or green colored sugar (just drop a couple drops of food coloring into a small bowl of sugar and stir)

Red or green ribbon

The printable tag below

What you do:

Mix the oatmeal and colored sugar in the jar. Attach the printable tag to the jar with a ribbon.

Take your reindeer food outside where the reindeer will see it and sprinkle it on the ground. Leave the jar, with the note attached, by the food.

Note: Some people suggest using glitter in place of the sugar. I think this is a bad idea, since birds and small animals will be attracted to the oatmeal and the glitter could hurt them.

Dear Santa,
Please allow your reindeer to enjoy this special treat while you warm up with milk and cookies inside. I made this snack especially for Rudolph and all his friends.

Merry Christmas,

Reindeer questions

1. A reindeer is a _____
a. Herbivore b. Carnivore c. Omnivore
2. Reindeer live in _____
a. The tropics b. The Arctic tundra c. Florida
3. Reindeer can migrate _____ miles in a year
a. 100 b. 3,000 c. 300
4. Reindeer have the _____ smallest antlers of all.
a. smallest b. largest c. second largest
5. A predator of the reindeer is _____
a. wolverine b. lion c. alligator
6. Reindeer hooves work like _____
a. tires b. dog's feet c. snow shoes
7. Humans use reindeer for _____
a. entertainment b. food and clothing c. gardening
8. The Scandinavian language has over _____ words related to reindeer
a. 40 b. 400 c. 4,000
9. Baby reindeer are called _____
a. fawns b. reindeerlings c. cubs
10. Reindeer can grow up to _____ feet long
a. 10 b. 2 c. 6