



To whom it may concern,

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 21 organisations, urge venues and local authorities to cease using reindeer in their Christmas events. Last year we wrote to event organisers and councils to bring their attention to [a new report](#) that highlighted the negative welfare impacts of events on reindeer and recommended that their use in entertainment events be ceased. 44 events that had previously used animals confirmed to us last year that they had made the responsible decision to instead host successful, reindeer-free events.

Scotland, England, and Wales have all banned the use of wild animals in circuses due to animal welfare concerns. It has been documented in a [recent report](#) that legal loopholes allow reindeer to be used for travelling festive performances in England. These same activities would be illegal if they were associated with a travelling circus, as stipulated by the Wild Animals in Circuses Act 2019. Similarly, in Scotland, reindeer used in festive displays face similar welfare risks to those that led to the use of wild animals in circuses being banned, under the Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Act 2018.

It is clear now from the research conducted into the use of reindeer in festive displays 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.

Reindeer are harder to keep in captivity than other mammals and 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, they note that poor body weight, weight loss, muscle atrophy and general malaise are commonly reported problems in captive reindeer. Added to this the pressures of long distance travel, repeated loading and unloading, pulling Santa's sleigh, and constant, unfamiliar and unpredictable interactions with the public through petting and feeding, result in reindeer used in festive entertainment being at severe risk of physical and mental fatigue and associated illnesses.

Using reindeer in festive events is a harmful and unnecessary practice which must now come to an end. Change is happening: since 2018 **we know of 153 events that have made the move to animal-free Christmas events.** We urge event organisers, venues, and councils to choose to join this compassionate movement, and cease using live reindeer in their entertainment.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Animal Aid, Born Free Foundation, Freedom for Animals, and OneKind.

With Support from Animal Defenders International, Animal Interfaith Alliance, Animal Protection Agency, Animal Think Tank, Catholic Concern for Animals, Crustacean Compassion, the FOAL Group, Four Paws, Peta, The Humane Society International, The League Against Cruel Sports, Naturewatch Foundation, Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund, World Animal Protection, Save The Asian Elephants, Shellfish Network, and Wild Welfare.

