

Dear [Insert establishment or event organiser]

I am writing to express my concerns about the use of live reindeer at [insert details of event].

Reindeer are semi-wild animals that are highly adapted to the Arctic environment. They have very different needs to deer that are native to the UK and it is much more difficult to meet their needs, particularly when kept by non-specialists in small groups for use at festive events. This means having them in a busy environment, surrounded by crowds, noise and lights during a festive event like this one makes it even more difficult.

These animals are easily stressed and they are very susceptible to many health and welfare problems when kept in permanent captivity in the UK, particularly in southern areas. Problems noted in reindeer kept in the UK include high stress levels, a lack of weight gain, weight loss, diarrhoea, poor muscle development, poor antler growth, malformed antlers and poor breeding success.

Concerns have been raised about the welfare of reindeer kept in the UK by various experts, including the Farm Animal Welfare Council, the Veterinary Deer Society and specialist vets. For example, an expert from the Veterinary Laboratories Agency stated that “[p]ermanent captivity far south of their range is really not a suitable place to keep reindeer, which are highly specialised arctic deer. Like puppies, reindeer should not just be for Christmas and the fashion to keep them in Great Britain purely for this purpose is a very worrying trend¹”.

I would like to respectfully request that you reconsider featuring live reindeer at this event and look at alternative ways to celebrate the festive season in a way that does not negatively impact on animals.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

[Insert name]

Local resident

¹ Aiden, F (2009). Reindeer need room to roam. Smallholder Christmas edition: 10–11.