

MEADOWLARK EXTENTION DISTRICT WEEKLY NEWS FROM AGENTS

Jody G Holthaus
Meadowlark Extension District Agent
Livestock-Natural Resources

How the Reindeer Do It?

Have you ever read something, and thought, "I wish I would of thought of that"? Such was the case when fellow agent Ray Ladd, in Atchison County shared this article. It's so good, I just had to share. It was in the Beef Daily email. "Just How Does Santa Get Around So Fast?" by Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Extension.

Have you ever wondered how Santa's reindeer can make that monumental journey on Christmas Eve? Let's look into some key facts about reindeer that may help us understand how they get Ole St. Nick on his appointed rounds over the world.

First of all, historians report that reindeer have been domesticated by humans for over 5000 years. Since Santa himself is no spring chicken, we can assume that they have worked together for quite awhile. They should not have any trouble finding their way around. There is no need to worry about them getting lost.

We do know that reindeer are ruminants. They are like cattle in this regard. They have four compartments to their stomach. Of course Santa gets them filled up with hay and moss before he leaves the North Pole, so they should have plenty of feed stored in the four compartments to make it all around the globe. Also, cattle nutritionists have known for years that hay digests more slowly than grain, therefore the big meal that the reindeer eat before the journey should last even longer. Or just like your mom says "It'll stick to their ribs!" As for drinking water that should be no problem whatsoever. In their homeland the water is all frozen so they are used to getting the moisture they need by eating snow. So as the sleigh is parked on snowy rooftops in cold weather cities, the reindeer can take on the moisture they need if they get thirsty.

How do they keep warm while flying around on Christmas Eve? The reindeer coat is made of two layers; an outer layer of bristles and an inner layer of dense fur. The fur that they have is very thick and can hold a lot of air. The "blanket" of insulation combining fur and air helps keep them warm in even the coldest of climates. Plus flying around Christmas night in many areas of the world that are warmer than they have at home should not be a problem.

How do they fly? Well that's a tougher question, but let's look at what we do know about them. Reindeer are amazingly fast runners on the ground. University of Alaska researchers report that a newborn baby reindeer at one day of age can out run the fastest graduate student. By the time that they are fully grown it is hard to tell what speeds that they could reach. Next remember those huge antlers. Antlers of adult male reindeer can be as much as 4 feet long! Just think about it. Each reindeer has 2 sets; that's 8 feet of antlers and with eight reindeer, or nine, if we count Rudolph on foggy nights that is 64 to 72 feet of total antler span. A typical small Cessna airplane only has about 36 feet of wingspan. Certainly it seems feasible those eight reindeer running that fast with all that antler span could get off the ground.

There are a couple of myths about reindeer that we should clear up. You have probably heard the poem that says that they have tiny reindeer feet. Actually they have a very wide large hoof that they use at home to dig through the snow to find grass and moss to eat. You've got to think that those wide hooves would come in handy for sliding to rather sudden stops on the small landing sites that Santa has to work with on Christmas Eve.

And you've probably heard the song about "up on the house top click, click, click". Well it is true that reindeer do make a clicking sound as they walk. They have a tendon that snaps over a bone joint and makes a clicking sound on every step.

These are just a few facts about Santa's Reindeer. Maybe this will help us understand that age-old mystery that occurs every Christmas Eve.

MEADOWLARK EXTENSION DISTRICT
WEEKLY NEWS FROM AGENTS

David Hallauer
Meadowlark Extension District Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Starting 2017 Off Right – Gardening Style!

Happy New Year! As difficult as it is to imagine that another year has passed, the calendar says it is true! Equally difficult is the idea that while Christmas decorations are just coming down, it's already time to start gardening!

It's true! Let's use onions as an example: if growing onions from seed, it will likely take six to eight weeks to reach transplant size. If we can put them out in late March – and we often can – that means starting seeds in late January! That means we need to be looking at and purchasing seed soon! Even our warm season crops like tomatoes or peppers might require six weeks or so from seed to transplant ready. If we plant in mid-May, that's an April first planting date. While that might seem like a long ways off, remember, 2016 went by quickly, as well!

If you plan to start transplants from seeds, success is best achieved by careful attention to detail. Once you've determined when to start transplants (if you need a list – K-State Research and Extension Horticulture Specialist Dr. Ward Upham has one I'd be happy to pass along!), make sure you can get the seed you want. Talk to friends and neighbors. Garden centers are a good resource as well. K-State's Recommended Vegetable Varieties publication is another resource that indexes plants proven to do well in Kansas.

Using an appropriate seeding medium (NOT garden soil!), keep seed moist by never allowing the seeding medium to dry out. Light is important as well. South facing windows can help, but you'll often need to use fluorescent fixtures placed two to four inches above the tops of the plants to get the 16 hours a day suggested for most plants.

You might think your home is warm, but it's often not warm enough for seed germination. Consider a heating mat for more consistent results since most seeds won't germinate unless temperatures are at 70 degrees or above! After germination, they can be grown at a cooler temperature (day: 65 to 70 degrees/night: 55 to 60 degrees) to help prevent tall, spindly transplants.

You'll also need to take a little time for brushing – yes, brushing! – since plants *do* react to movement. Twenty brushing strokes per day with your hand over the plants stimulates them to become stockier and less leggy. Brushing will *not* compensate for lack of light or over-crowding.

All the work you've done above could be for nothing if you don't prepare transplants to move outside from their comfortable indoor environment! Harden plants off during the two weeks prior to transplanting by moving them outside for an increasing number of hours each day. This will gradually increase their exposure to sun and wind prior to permanent transplanting. For a list of seeding dates/temperatures, or a copy of the Recommended Vegetable Varieties, contact a Meadowlark Extension District Office or e-mail me at dhallaue@ksu.edu

MEADOWLARK EXTENSION DISTRICT WEEKLY NEWS FROM AGENTS

Cindy Williams
Meadowlark Extension District Agent
Food and Nutrition, FNP

Eating Better on a Budget for the New Year

Looking for a New Year's resolution that will help cut costs and put money back in your pocket? If so, consider taking a look at your food budget as a way to get healthy and save money. Here are three simple tips to help you get started:

Plan, plan and plan! Plan your meals for the week before heading to the grocery store. Always shop in your pantry, refrigerator and freezer while preparing your list to avoid purchasing duplicate items and to utilize the ingredients you have.

Get the best price. Take advantage of sales on meat and seafood which are usually the most expensive items on your list. Utilize store ads and coupons when planning your meals. Also, use loyalty cards to maximize your savings.

Prepare meals that stretch your food dollar. Make a weekly plan that includes stews, casseroles, or soups which is a great way to stretch expensive items and allows for leftovers. Be sure to incorporate high fiber foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to increase satiety.

Did You Know??

1. Less than 1/2 of Kansas adults meet minimum recommendations for physical activity.
2. Just 19% of Kansans eat enough fruits and vegetables.
3. Chronic diseases, including obesity, is responsible for more than 70% of health care costs. K-State Research and Extension programs are designed to help Kansans work on some of these facts. Look for upcoming Meadowlark Extension District programs coming up this year that will help to address some of these facts.

Some of these future programs coming up in the district include: Stay Strong Stay Health (exercise program for inactive senior citizens), food preservation workshop to help increase (consumption of fruits and vegetables/reduce sugar and salt consumption), Walk Kansas and budgeting programs, to name a few.

If you have interest in any of these topics, be sure to contact your local Meadowlark Extension Office to find out more details. We have offices located in Seneca-(785) 336-2184, Holton-(785) 364-4125 and Oskaloosa-(785) 863-2212.

**MEADOWLARK EXTENTION DISTRICT
WEEKLY NEWS FROM AGENTS**

**Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District Agent
Family Life**

No News