



REINDEER AND OTHER ANIMALS

Driving on the roads of Finland may bring you some experience with animals that are common in the forests.

In Lapland you have a very good chance to see some reindeer on or beside the roads. Although they are living free in the forests, swamps and hills of Lapland, they are actually not wild animals and always belong to someone. In the late winter the owners drive them all together to separation places and earmark the new born ones, so they can identify them later as their property. They will also decide whether the animal will be sold, slaughtered or freed again.

In the 15th century the Lapp-people (Saame) started to look after the reindeer and they became breeders. The Saame-people lived close to the animals in the wilderness, sleeping in tents all year round, but nowadays they drive with their snow-scooters or motorcross-cycles to feed the animals and look after them. Sometimes these trips may last all day and a few hundred kilometres and if necessary airplanes are used to find lost animals. In some cases the owners cross borders between Finland, Sweden and Norway to find their property and bring them back. The Lapp-people are free to cross the country borders without customs bureaucracy (resembling the situation of the inner borders of the European Union nowadays).

Reindeers are raised to get meat, fur, and skin. Lapp-people's income is, besides tourism, based on the reindeer. So never ask them how many reindeer they have, it's like asking how much money they have in the bank.

The original reindeer area is in the north of Finland and start above Oulu.

The natural enemies of the reindeer are animals like wolves and bears, but nowadays the greatest danger comes from motor traffic. About 4200 reindeers get killed every year on streets and railroad tracks only in Finland. The reindeer does not fear cars, but the headlights irritate them. They may stop in the middle of the road and stare into the lights. When the car starts driving they run, the car stops, they stop too... This game may continue quite a long time until the animal find the courage to flee into the wilderness besides the road.

To avoid accidents do not drive too fast, follow the street signs and if you see animal tracks beside the road, slow down immediately. In case of an accident, contact the local police (through 112), because the owner of the reindeer must be informed. The reindeer owner's practical instructions are that the blood should be taken out of an injured animal to prevent

the meat to be spoiled and the left ear should be taken to the police so that the breeder can get the compensation. Well, maybe it is better just phone them.

In the Southern part of Finland the most dangerous animal to cause car accidents is the elk (moose). A reindeer accident can cause a lot of damage to the car, but elks weighting up to 500 kg cause serious damages to cars and injuries to persons. Almost all of the accidents with elks, happen in the first three hours after sunset. Please follow the warning signs and slow down for your own safety, even if others do not!

In the wintertime you can also see deer, rabbits and birds. Wolves normally stay deep in the forest and luckily the bears are asleep.



Beware of reindeer



Beware of elks



Beware of skiers crossing the road



Beware of thin ice



Residential area = 50 km/h



End of residential area = 80 km/h

Headlights must be used all the time when driving on the roads!

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