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THIS JUST IN: USDA Issues Permit for Santa's Reindeer to Enter the United States

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WASHINGTON, D.C., December 22, 2025 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today issued a transit permit to Mr. S. Nicholas Claus of the North Pole, a distributor with Gifts and Good Cheer, Inc. The permit will allow reindeer to enter and exit the United States between the hours of 6 p.m. on Dec. 24, 2025, and 6 a.m. on Dec. 25, 2025, local time, through or over any U.S. border port.

"USDA is delighted to grant Mr. Claus and his reindeer a special permit to enter the United States, ensuring a seamless journey for the joy they bring each holiday season," said Dudley Hoskins, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. "We extend a warm welcome to Mr. Claus and recognize the vital role of U.S. whole milk and cookies in fueling his festive flight."

Veterinary officials ensured the reindeer met all entry requirements before issuing the permit. Dr. Rosemary Sifford, USDA's Chief Veterinary Officer, stated: "At a recent inspection, the reindeer were found to be healthy and able to prance and paw with each hoof."

It was noted on the health certificate that one reindeer, Rudolph, has a minor physical anomaly. However, APHIS indicated that Rudolph's red nose, while bright, was normal for him and not a concern.

APHIS regulates the movement of cervids, including reindeer, to protect the health of America's livestock population. The permitting process provides assurance that only healthy animals enter the United States.

USDA has confirmed that the reindeer will arrive pulling a wooden sleigh with jingling bells attached, filled with brightly wrapped gifts. Port personnel will clean and disinfect the runners and underside of the sleigh at the time of entry. They will also conduct a short visual inspection of the reindeer. Mr. Claus has been asked to disinfect his boots and thoroughly wash his hands. These measures are intended to prevent the entry of any livestock diseases the team may encounter during deliveries to farms and houses around the world prior to entering the United States.

Mr. Claus also provided an advance list of what port personnel should expect upon their arrival. This includes a variety of food items, all of which come from approved locations and none of which pose a threat to U.S. animal or plant health.

"It's important that Gifts and Good Cheer, Inc. take all the right steps and precautions to protect against the potential introduction of pests and diseases," explained Mr. Claus. "I appreciate USDA's assistance every year as we gear up for our big night."

Whatever you celebrate this time of year, USDA wishes you a joyful and healthy

season filled with meaningful traditions and celebrations.