Reindeer

Reindeer are the stars of many Christmas stories. Santa’s sleigh is pulled through the sky by a herd of flying reindeer and Rudolph guides them all with his bright red nose! But real reindeer can’t fly and their noses can’t light up the sky.

Wild reindeer are known as caribou. Reindeer have been domesticated by tribes of people that live in the forests, mountains and arctic plains of cold northern places, such as Russia and Scandinavia, for thousands of years. Reindeer don’t mind the freezing cold temperatures in which they live. Their special fur coat traps air to keep them warm and their wide hooves keep them from sinking in the snow.

One main difference between reindeer and other animals that have antlers is that both male and female reindeer grow antlers. Usually, in animal species like elk and deer, only the male grows antlers. The reindeer shed their four foot long antlers once a year and grow a new pair.

Reindeer can grow to weigh 300 pounds! They generally eat a small green plant called lichen, mushrooms, and other vegetation that is available where they live. They can also dig up roots with their hooves and antlers.

The male reindeer is called a bull. The female reindeer is called a cow. Reindeer calves are born in the spring. They can run just ninety minutes after they are born! They need to learn quickly to keep up with the rest of the herd.

Reindeer play an important role in the economy of many cultures, providing the people with food, clothing, and transportation. They do much more than just pull Santa’s sleigh!
Reindeer

Dictionary skills – Use your dictionary to find the definitions.

Herd - ___________________________________________
Domesticated - ___________________________
Antlers - _________________________________________
Species - _______________________________________
Lichen - __________________________________________
Vegetation - _______________________________________
Economy - _________________________________________
Transportation - ____________________________________

Choose three of the above words and put each word in a sentence.

1. _____________________________________________
   _______________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________
   _______________________________________________

3. _____________________________________________
   _______________________________________________

True or False? Write a “T” next to sentences that are true and an “F” next to sentences that are false.

1. _____ Female reindeer have antlers.
2. _____ Reindeer have red noses that light up.
3. _____ It takes a newborn reindeer several days to learn to run.
4. _____ Lichen is a small bug that lives in the forest.
5. _____ Reindeer live in groups called herds.
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Use the Venn diagram below to compare and contrast what you learned about reindeer with what you know about the common white-tailed deer that lives in the forest of North America.

Using the ideas above, write a paragraph about how deer and reindeer are alike.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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Dictionary Skills:
Herd – a group of animals
Domesticated – tame, kept by people
Antlers – hard, horn-like protrusions on certain animals’ heads
Species – a kind of animal
Lichen – a small green plant that grows close to the group
Vegetation – plant growth
Economy – the relationship between people, jobs, money, needs and wants
Transportation – ways of getting around

True or False
1. T
2. F
3. F
4. F
5. T

Venn diagram – answers will vary