

Medicine for Managers

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Reindeer Aren't Just For Christmas

Expectations rise as Christmas approaches, but I am prepared to bet that few people actually consider the logistics of ensuring that Santa and his sleigh works without problems to ensure his arrival with the presents. Integral is the health and fitness of his reindeer team. The demands on them are prodigious but Santa retains their fitness through a balanced diet including magic lichens and carrots, prepared by elves.

Their success is predicated on regular exercise together with flying practice and team training. The elves have responsibility for ensuring the reindeer maintain their magical abilities, crucial for long journeys. The ability to fly is achieved by a combination of magic dust and the joy of children globally, together with Santa's encouragement.

Reindeer are actually vulnerable to a variety of diseases, most notably:

- **Chronic Wasting Disease**, a disease of nerves which results in weight loss, lack of co-ordination and behavioural problems
- **Brucellosis**, a contagious bacterial infection
- **Foot Rot**, a bacterial infection causing lameness and treated with penicillin
- **Bluetongue** causing fever, ulcers round the muzzle, swollen head and lameness
- **TB, Tetanus, Pneumonia** and **maggots in the antlers**.



However the elves do a great job of keeping them healthy

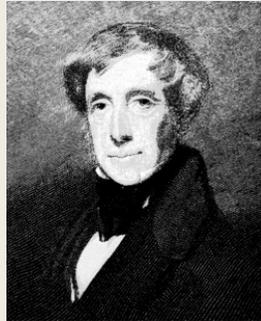
We know that Santa's sleigh was pulled by eight reindeer with **Rudolph** at the front as the ninth and youngest reindeer, using his luminous red nose to guide the team. He first appeared in 1939, the creation of **Robert L May** and published by the Department Store, Montgomery Ward, in Chicago.

Santa himself hasn't always worn red. Before the twentieth century he commonly wore green robes, symbolising winter and old folklore and there were many variations.

However, in 1931, Haddon Sundblom, Coca-Cola's illustrator, produced a series of illustrations for Father Christmas wearing a glowing red suit, suggesting holiday cheer. Subsequently, the Coca-Cola branding disappeared but the red suit has endured.

For the details of the reindeer, we need to turn to what is probably the best known verse of an American, *"A visit from St Nicholas"*, written by **Clement Clarke Moore** in 1822 for his children, and first published anonymously in the *Troy New York Sentinel* the following year.

Clement Moore (1779-1863) was born in New York and became Professor of Oriental and Greek Literature, Divinity and Biblical Learning at the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church in New York City.



The poem so comfortably sets the scene for Christmas and makes one feel that all is right with the world.

"Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds;
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,
When what to my wondering eyes did appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny rein-deer,
With a little old driver so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment he must be St. Nick.

More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:

"Now, *Dasher!* now, *Dancer!*

now *Prancer* and *Vixen!*

On, *Comet!* on, *Cupid!* on, *Donder* and *Blitzen!*

To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!

Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"

As leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,

When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;

So up to the housetop the coursers they flew

With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too

—

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof

The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.

As I drew in my head, and was turning around,

Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,

And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;

A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,

And he looked like a pedlar just opening his pack.

His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!

His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!

His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,

And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow;

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath;

He had a broad face and a little round belly

That shook when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head

Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,

And filled all the stockings; then turned with a
jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a
whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of
sight—
Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!”

Whether we call him Father Christmas, Santa
Claus or St Nicholas, I hope he visits you one
and all.

I wish you all a vary happy and peaceful
Christmas. Stay safe and well and let us all pray
for a happier and more peaceful 2026.

My warmest regards and thanks to you all.

[Paul](#)