



Handout – for ROBA Conference

**Greg Finstad Reindeer Research Endowment  
University of Alaska Fairbanks**

**Purpose:** To provide general support for the Reindeer Research Program. Expenditures from this fund may include, but are not limited to, salaries, stipends, awards, scholarships, travel, equipment, contractual services, commodities, representational and nonrepresentational expenditures.

**To make a gift to the Greg Finstad Reindeer Research Endowment at the University of Alaska Fairbanks:**

Make checks payable to "UA Foundation" and include "Greg Finstad Reindeer Research Endowment" in the note.

- **Mail:**  
UAF Development  
P.O. Box 757530  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775
- **On-line:**  
Contributions may be made online at [www.uaf.edu/giving/gift](http://www.uaf.edu/giving/gift); please note "Greg Finstad Reindeer Research Endowment" in the gift designation field.
- **Phone:**  
Please call 1-800-823-4483 or 907-474-2619 to contribute by phone.

Ron Disher has committed to **matching all gifts made by ROBA members** to the Greg Finstad Reindeer Research Endowment **dollar for dollar** up to \$25,000!

If you have any questions, please contact Ron Disher at 419-877-5129 or contact Emily Drygas, UAF Development Director at 907-474-6631 or by email at [emily.drygas@alaska.edu](mailto:emily.drygas@alaska.edu).



Figure 1: UAF Photo by Todd Paris

## Ohio farmer believes in Alaska reindeer research

A reindeer producer in Ohio is so enthusiastic about the work being done by the University of Alaska Fairbanks Reindeer Research Program that he has put his money where his enthusiasm is.

Ron Disher of Waterville, Ohio, met RRP manager Greg Finstad at a Reindeer Owners and Breeders Association meeting about six years ago and was impressed to learn about the nation's only university-based reindeer research program.

Initially, Disher wanted to establish a chair for RRP, but after learning from the UAF Development Office that it takes \$1 million to do so, Disher decided he was "a few dollars short." Instead, he wrote a check for \$5,000 and promised to keep giving that amount for the next few years until he has donated \$25,000. The earnings off this account will go to care and support of the research herd at AFES UAF. He also issued a challenge to ROBA members that if they make donations to RRP he will match them.

"With all the budget cuts we have been worried," Finstad said. "This came at the perfect time and will help us continue the work of the Reindeer Research Program. This will provide tangible and physical support of our research efforts and help us maintain our research herd in the future. Without the animals we can't do the research."

RRP is dedicated to the development and promotion of the reindeer industry on the Seward Peninsula and throughout Alaska. The RRP staff work closely with producers to develop and conduct research projects that can be applied directly to their operations. Areas of focus are meat science, range management and nutrition, animal health, radio and satellite telemetry, production unique to the Seward Peninsula, and educational outreach.

Part of the RRP is with Disher today. The hide and antlers of a reindeer sent to slaughter were donated to Disher. He had a taxidermist mount the animal according to his wishes, and was delighted with "Claudine." He has been taking her with him this Christmas season to promote the Christmas storybook and coloring book he wrote. Children have their picture taken with Claudine appearing to pull a sleigh, which reduces the insurance costs and liability associated with using a live animal.

The storybook that Disher wrote is called "Santa Claus and Claudine: The Happiest Reindeer Ever." Disher holds degrees from Ohio State University and Bowling Green State University and a master's in vocational education from the University of Toledo. He has been farming since 1951, raising grain crops, livestock, poultry, Christmas trees, reindeer, and camels. He was a teacher and coach for over thirty years. His daughter Megan Disher assisted him in the book project. She is studying biology at Bowling Green State University.

Disher has yet to visit the reindeer herd at the Fairbanks Experiment Farm on the UAF campus but hopes to make the trip soon.

Finstad said, "I am extremely touched and honored. This will keep reindeer research going and establish a legacy."

To donate to RRP, a program of the UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, contact the UAF Development Office, P.O. Box 757530, Fairbanks, AK 99775 or call 907-474-2619.

(article provided by the UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, Fairbanks, Alaska. Contact [ntarnai@alaska.edu](mailto:ntarnai@alaska.edu))