

# NOMAD Fieldnews

2<sup>nd</sup> Issue

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During the last days before departure for Belaia Golovka Corral Base we have been following the results of the last round ups of the “Tundra” Cooperative. According to herders, who keep coming to Lovozero and going back to Belaia, the final round ups are being planned till about mid-April.



**Picture 1.** Early April in Lovozero. A view towards the Southern cluster of garages.

These late round ups are taking place at a time when female deer are in their final month of pregnancy. The highly stressful corralling procedures at such a time reflect badly on the herd by causing numerous abortions and generally compromising the imminent calving process. This abnormal situation has become an established pattern during the last years, leading many herders to ask what they are in this much changed relationship between humans and Rangifer – are they being engaged in reindeer husbandry or are they acting as “round-uppers” (*zagonshchiki*)?



**Picture 2.** The garages are the main centers of local male activities. Besides serving for storage and repairs of the various transportation machines (cars, snow-scooters, and motor-bikes), they are important storage facilities for tundra-resources: primarily reindeer meat and fresh water fish.

As this pattern of herding is increasingly resembling predator behavior, the herd itself, and especially its reproductive female part, behave as prey in response, trying to avoid human contact as much as possible. We can expect therefore that as soon as corralling activities are over at Belaia, the herd shall try to get away to safe places for calving as swiftly as possible.

This escape movement is further prompted by climate change factors – the herd has to cross over rivers and lakes while there is still firm ice and before the calves get born. With early thawing, which has become common, we could expect that the period mid-to-late April shall see a swift movement of the herd between the late winter pastures around Belaia and the calving grounds on the eastern side of the river Iokanga. For our target composite herd, the likely calving spots can be expected to be in the southern looking low hills around lakes Kolmozero, Ketkozero, and Kalmozero.



**Picture 3.** The Swedish “Polarica” slaughter facility in Lovozero.

In the meantime a constant flow of freshly slaughtered deer comes down from the hills. These are deer counted as “private” and slaughtered immediately at the corral. The cooperative deer, by contrast, get driven down to Lovozero on the hoof, and their harvesting is done, in accordance with all veterinary norms of the European Union, in the slaughter house of the Swedish “Polarica” Company.



**Picture 4.** Butchering reindeer meat at Polarica. Photo: Vladimir Kuzhentsov.

Private carcasses find their way into garages ( storage and repair shacks which are clustered all around the village. Here they get cut up and sold locally. The trade is part of the local informal economy and follows the social contacts of the trader. One sells to friends or their friends and very rarely to complete strangers. The garages are key infrastructural components of this trade, in which herders are only one category of actors, the rest being friends of herders

from Lovozero or from the "remote villages": Krasnoshchel'e, Kanevka and Sosnovka, or simply traders (*kommersanty*). Currently prices hover around an average of RBL 100 per kilo of carcass meat, or 3 euro.



**Picture 5.** In the "slaughter season" reindeer meat is being stored, butchered, and sold in many garages in Lovozero.

**Text and photographs (where not indicated):**  
Yulian Konstantinov, Vladislava Vladimirova