MSc program Applied Ethology and Animal Biology

Welfare aspect when loading and unloading reindeer for road transport

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Background

Reindeer are extensively kept and have litte contact with humans, handling and loading facilities and might, therefore, be particularly susepcteble to stress during loading/unloading.

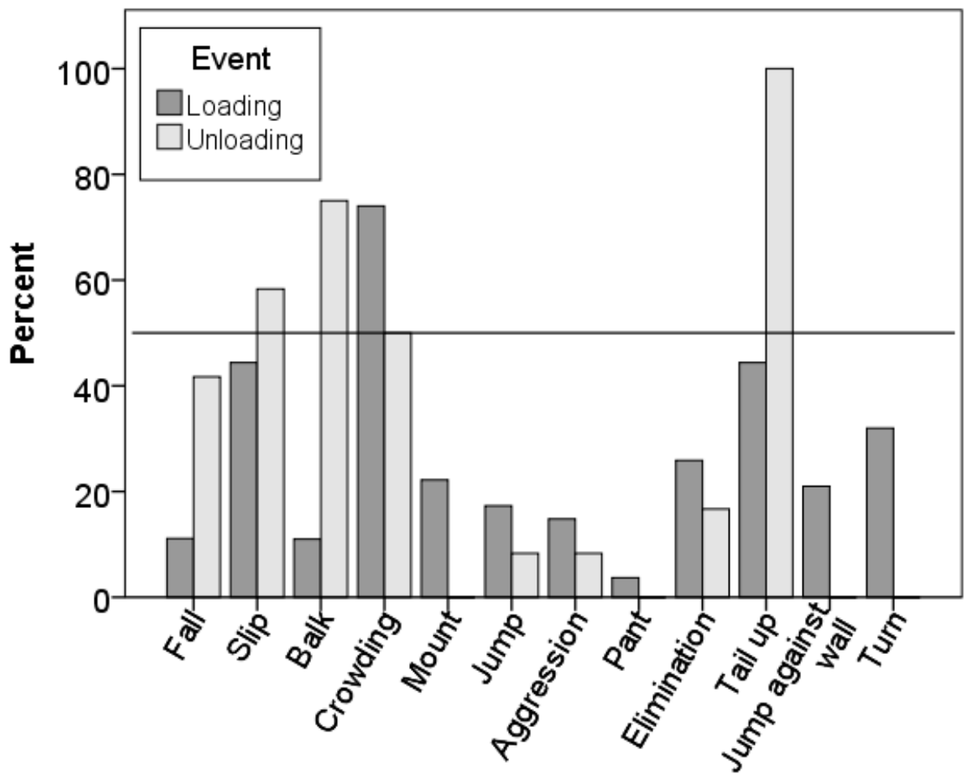
The **aim** of the study was to assess and pinpoint factors that affect reindeer welfare during loading/unloading.

Methods

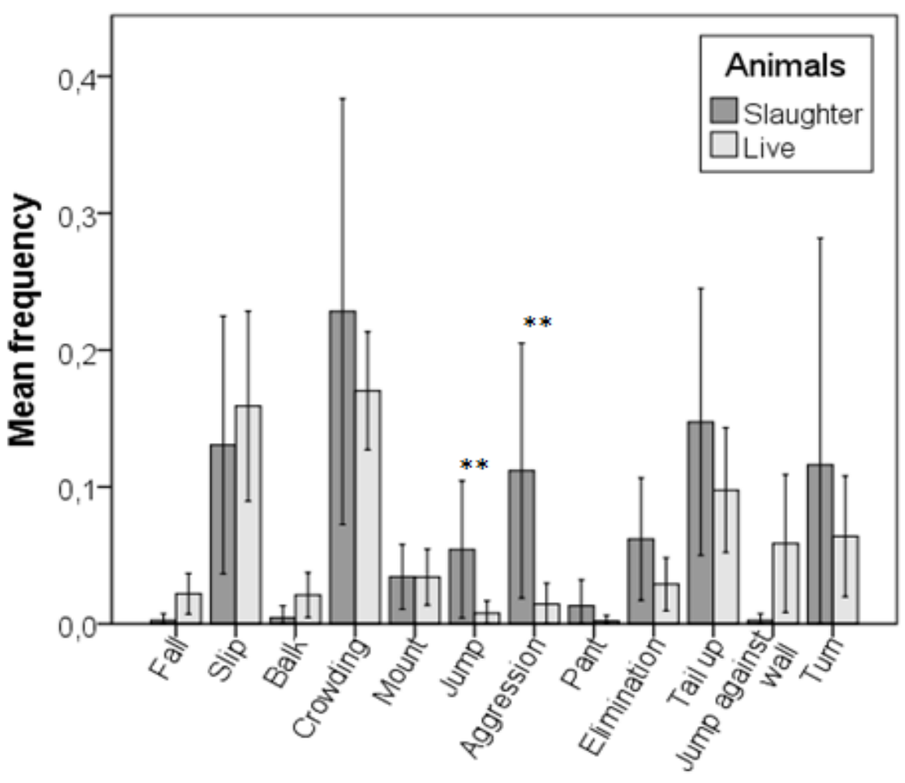
Reindeer and handlers were observed during loading and unloading. The pre-loading handling and time to load/unload was recorded. The loading/unloading facilities were evaluated.

Results

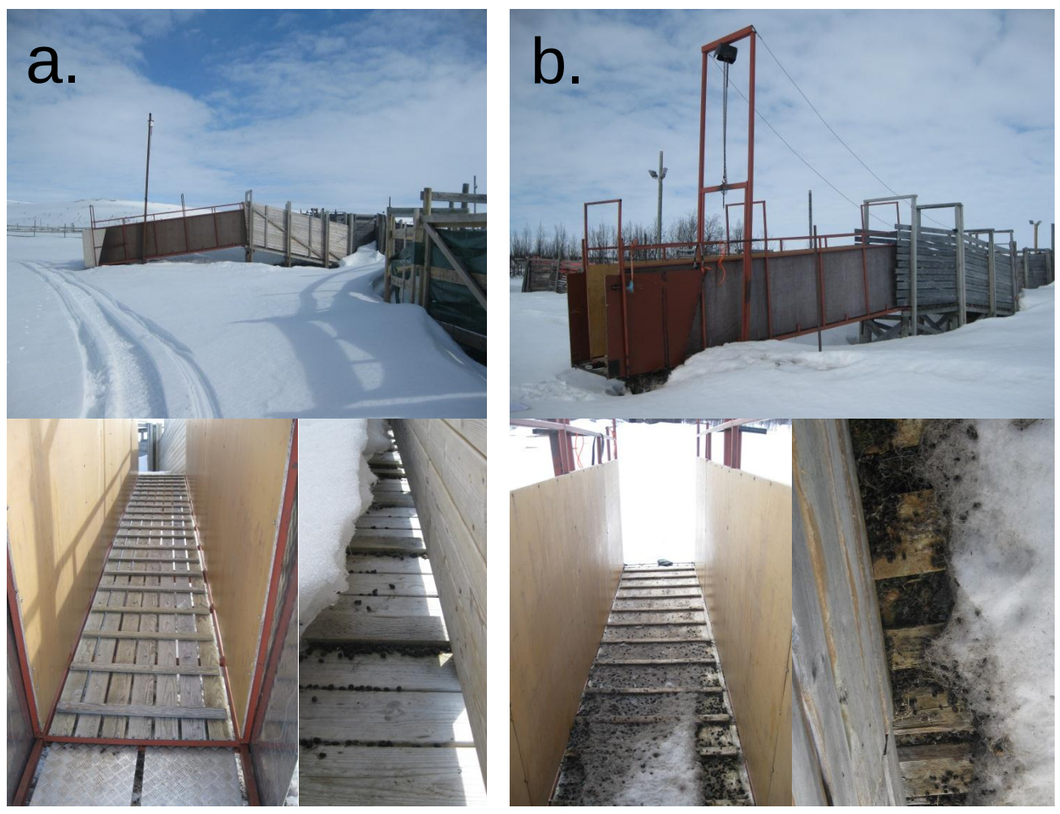
Reindeer behaviors observed during loading/unloading, expressed as the percentage of all the loadings/unloadings in which the behaviors were observed.



Differences between slaughter and live-animals in behaviors observed were found. **p<0.01



Time spent in corral between pre-loading handling and loading correlated negatively with the reindeer behavior Aggression (r_s=-0.316, p=0.004) and the time to load reindeer into the lorry (r_s=-0.412, p>0.001).



a. Pulsujärvi loading ramp; with slatted flooring and cleats spaced to far apart.
b. Järämä loading ramp, without slatted flooring and cleats spaced to close.

Both ramps cause slipping in reindeer, slatted flooring is to prefer for avoiding hard-packed snow on the ramp and for hygenic reasons.

Conclusions

- Wrongly constructed loading ramps seems to be the major cause for slipping and falling in reindeer during loading/unloading.
- Herd composition seems to have an effect on behaviors displayed during loading.
- Increased resting time between pre-loading handling and loading seem to decrease time to load reindeer and some stress related behaviors observed.

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