



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE & COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON  
COMMISSIONER



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
BOARD OF ANIMAL HEALTH**

JAMES WATSON  
STATE VETERINARIAN

# PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 22, 2023**

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## **MBAH Grants Certification for Santa's Reindeer to Enter Mississippi**

**JACKSON, Miss.** – Today, the Mississippi Board of Animal Health (MBAH) issued a certificate of veterinary inspection to Santa Claus of the North Pole, which permits Mr. Claus' reindeer to enter and exit the state of Mississippi between the hours of 6 p.m. on December 24, 2023, and 6 a.m. on December 25, 2023.

“I have spoken with our state veterinarian and Board of Animal Health officials, and I'm glad to report everything is in order,” said Andy Gipson, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce and MBAH Ex Officio Board Member. “The children of Mississippi can rest assured that Santa Claus and his nine reindeer will be allowed to pass through our great state this holiday season. And no matter what holiday you may celebrate this winter, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce wishes everyone a happy and healthy time.”

Dr. James Watson, State Veterinarian with MBAH, ensured the reindeer met all entry requirements before issuing the certification. As part of the agency's responsibilities, MBAH regulates the movement of exotic livestock, including reindeer, to protect the health of Mississippi's livestock population. “We are delighted to welcome Mr. Claus and his reindeer into the magnolia state on the night of Christmas Eve. Due to urgent business purposes, we have granted Mr. Claus permission to cross our borders and deliver his special packages to farms and houses around the state,” said Dr. Watson.

It was noted that one of the reindeer, named Rudolph, has a unique physical abnormality during inspection. However, Dr. Watson assures the public that there is no cause for concern and encourages families to provide milk and cookies to fortify the animals, and Mr. Claus, on their long journey.

The Board of Animal Health was created by the Mississippi Legislature and given plenary power to deal with all contagious and infectious diseases of animals as in the opinion of the board may be prevented,

controlled, or eradicated, and with full power to make, promulgate, and enforce such rules and regulations as may be necessary to control, eradicate and prevent those diseases.

The Mississippi Board of Animal Health works closely with the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) and is housed inside the MDAC building headquarters. To learn more about MBAH, visit [www.mbah.ms.gov](http://www.mbah.ms.gov).

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**Photo attached.**



**Dr. James Watson, State Veterinarian, signs a certificate of veterinary inspection to permit Santa Claus' reindeer to enter and exit the state of Mississippi between the hours of 6 p.m. on December 24, 2023, and 6 a.m. on December 25, 2023.**