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Norway Upgrades Border Fence With Russia to Stop Reindeer Crossings

By AFP

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Reindeer in Norway. **Arnstein Rønning (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

Norwegian authorities said Thursday they will upgrade a fence near Norway's border with Russia in the far north to stop its reindeer from making crossings over the international boundary.

A fence spanning some 150 kilometers along the Russia-Norway border is already in place, constructed to prevent cross-border movement by the animals.

However, some sections have fallen into such disrepair that the reindeer can easily pass through the fence.

"It is strictly forbidden to cross the border into Russia, for reindeer too," the Norwegian Directorate of Agriculture said in a statement.

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Since the beginning of this year, scores of Norwegian reindeer have crossed the Russia-Norway border to graze in the Murmansk region's Pasvik nature reserve

In response, Russian authorities have demanded millions of dollars in damages from neighboring Norway, saying the animals eat away moss and shrubs and trample ground vegetation — which has purportedly led to soil erosion and plant life degradation.

Norway's Directorate of Agriculture has therefore ordered the construction of a new fence on a seven-kilometer section by Oct. 1, at a cost of 3.7 million kroner ($345,000).

The reindeer, bred by the indigenous Sami reindeer herders that span northern Europe, are semi-nomadic and travel across vast expanses as they move between their winter and summer grazing grounds.

In this Arctic region, Norway and Russia share just one authorized land crossing, the Storskog-Boris Gleb border point.

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