

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

A Drilling Rig Stands In The Way Of A Reindeer

...A trusting, innocent, young reindeer fell behind the herd. He lost his way. Sensing the smell of human habitation, he rushed toward the fires that flashed momentarily above the tundra. On the approach to the drilling area, he broke a hoof on spikes protruding from the ground. Then he got his antlers entangled in an abandoned metallic structure and could not free himself from the "trap"...

Was it only imagination that drew this tragic picture? Maybe it isn't worth "raising a ruckus" about? Let us ask the indigenous peoples of the tundra. Shaking his frost-covered parka, reindeer herdsman, Aleksey Chuprov, invited me to his parents' home in the village of Krasnyy. Over a cup of tea, he lamented:

"Many reindeer are perishing needlessly. In each herding team the loss of animals is numbered in the dozens - some poisoned by chemical residues, some running afoul of metal stakes. And how much pasture has been lost since the arrival of the drill rigs!"

On the Kharp Collective Farm, where my companion works as a team leader, reindeer herding is the most profitable activity. But for some time drill rigs have occupied a third of the pasture. After they are taken away, the herdsmen have to move the reindeer trails and seek new grazing areas because many of the rivers and lakes - Lake Ostrovnoye, for example - no longer have water that is fit for drinking. They are poisoned.