



HANGING OUT—A herd of musk oxen with a few youngsters relax on a rock outcropping outside of Nome.

Photo Diana Haecker

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Photo by Keith Conger

**FIRST ONE THROUGH** — Abu Oquilluk opens the door, while Kakaruk herd manager Jimmy Pushruk, right front, and his crew watch Arin Ablowaluk, left front, release the first reindeer to pass through the Seward Peninsula's newest reindeer corral on Friday, June 26. This "maverick female" was the first of 256 deer to receive one of the new orange Kakaruk ear tags.

## First reindeer pass through Seward Peninsula's newest corral

Story and photos  
by Keith Conger

Anyone driving to Teller during the summer of 2024 noticed the construction east of the Teller Highway at mile 48. It consisted of gap-spaced walls placed at unusual angles with no roofs.

Locals knew it was a corral building project spearheaded by Teller resident Jimmy Pushruk, a retired State of Alaska equipment operator and long-time reindeer herder. Pushruk and his supporting cast had set up a sort of "if you build it, they will come" situation.

But bad weather and tough snow conditions made it impossible for them to bring the herd in during the corral's first two years, so it sat vacant. By this summer, Pushruk and

his sister Brenda Pushruk were quite anxious to test their creation.

Pushruk, who manages the Kakaruk reindeer herd, knew his deer were out there somewhere. His unfenced grazing grounds start at the Bering Sea and extend from the tip of Point Spencer to around 30 miles west of Imuruk Basin. This 1,200 square mile area was way too big for him to search on foot, as he did in his youth, or even by four-wheeler. So, he turned to a method pioneered by the late bush pilot Jim Isabell in the 1970s — a helicopter.

Pushruk's logical choice for wingman was Patrik Toerdal, who has flown the Teller herder around doing range studies, looking for lichen and other foraging foods. Toerdal had also taken the late reindeer industry stalwart Tom Gray of White Mountain up in the air to move his herd.

Toerdal landed in Teller at 10 a.m. on Friday, June 26, to pick Pushruk up in a Bering Air helicopter. After finding no deer along the hills south of Teller, the pair headed to the Kigluak Mountain Range, which is surrounded by the Kakaruk grazing grounds. They zigzagged through deep valleys along the range's western edge until they discovered several hundred deer. "They were way up in the mountains on a patch of snow. I couldn't believe how high they were," Pushruk said later.

Toerdal thought the deer were

around 2,700 feet above sea level and just behind Grand Singtook, the mountain also known as 3870.

There, some 15 miles as the crow flies from the corral, the chopper and its hooved partners began a strange dance. The deer had not been driven in some time, so their wild side was evident. "We had a hard time getting them off the mountain because they kept wanting to go higher," said Pushruk.

The men eventually coaxed the cluster into descending by relying on the pilot's flying skills and the herder's knowledge of reindeer body language. "After a while, we got them going in the direction we wanted," said Pushruk.

Once the herd was about four miles from the corral, the fliers took a break to allow Pushruk's crew to drive the 27 miles from Teller. When the first wave of helpers arrived, Pushruk explained his plan. Then the pilot and he went back up to finish guiding the animals into the corral's wing, which is made up of two long lines of posts holding up an eight-foot-tall wire-mesh fence.

A group of approximately 30 escaped. But the ground team funneled the rest into the large circular holding pen enclosure around 1:30 pm.

At first, the tightly compressed mass kicked up dust as it moved

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## Grand jury indicts man on 47 counts of sexual abuse crimes

By Diana Haecker

Ulric Jeffery Ulroan, 48, was arrested in Nome and charged with 47 counts of sexual abuses of minors, sexual assaults and furnishing alcohol to a victim under 21, for alleged crimes against children in his care and a woman over 18 years of age, spanning a period of time from 2009 to 2025.

According to the indictment returned by a Bethel Grand Jury last week, the alleged abuses involved at least five victims. The indictment charged Ulroan, who is from Chevak but now lives in Nome, with Sexual Assault in the First Degree, Sexual Abuse of a Minor in the First Degree, Sexual Abuse of a Minor in the Second Degree, Indecent Exposure in the Second Degree, and Furnishing Alcohol to a Person Under 21. These charges relate to allegations that Ulroan sexually assaulted and

abused various teenage girls between 2009 and 2025 in Chevak, Anchorage, Mountain Village and Nome.

After the Bethel Grand Jury returned a true bill, an arrest warrant was issued and Ulroan was arrested on June 24 on Bering Street in Nome.

Lead Investigator Brian Wassmann with the Western Major Crimes Unit of the Alaska Bureau of Investigation said the investigation began in January when the bureau received a tip by a person who had seen a post on social media about sexual abuse involving an alleged victim. The tip alleged that Ulroan sexually abused a 17-year-old girl in Chevak between 2009 and 2010. "We contacted the victim and got more information about the case, which led to identifying other vic-

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## Mizuktata – Nome kids become entrepreneurs

By Ariana Crockett O'Harra

Clouds and occasional rain didn't stop Nome's young entrepreneurs from showing up for Mizuktata last Saturday, June 27. Mizuktata, which means "let's drink juice" in Inupiaq, is Nome's version of Lemonade Day, a national program that aims to teach kids how to start, own and operate a small business.

Mizuktata has been organized for the last few years by local Nomeite Krystal Hensley. This year, the Bering Sea Lions Club, or BSLC for short, stepped in to help Hensley with the effort. Twenty kids participated in a budget workshop on Thursday evening and there were 49

registered stands dotting Nome on Saturday, selling everything from biscuits and gravy to cupcakes and of course, lemonade.

Hensley said that the reach of the Lions Club helped get the word out to more participants. There were 15 more registered stands than last year, but when she went around Nome on Saturday, there were even stands that had signed up too late to be included in the official count. "We had over 50 stands this year. It was amazing," she said.

Hensley said that Mizuktata can

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Photo by Ariana Crockett O'Harra

**VENTRESS VICTUALS**— Mercy, June, Theo and Elsie Ventress pose in front of their Mizuktata stand on Saturday, June 27 in Nome.

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