Plump Reindeer—

After a Rough Start, Togiak Herd Thrives

"Now they're plump—they really plumped up. I think that place is real good for the reindeer," said Andrew Franklin of Togiak this week in Fairbanks. "They're real round and fat."

With a show of enthusiasm, Andrew Franklin told Tundra Times that the reindeer transplanted to Hegemeister Island almost three years ago by the Bureau of Indian Affairs from Nunivak Island are thriving.

Around 300 reindeer were airlifted but the mortality rate was high and some 70 of the herd survived according to Andrew Franklin.

"Now we have 175. First year they killed one but the meat wasn't good. Meat is real good now. They're real plump—they're real fat and everything," said Franklin. "Village people pretty excited about reindeer.

(Continued on page 6)

Togiak Reindeer Herd Thrives . . .

(Continued from page 1)

Maybe in a few years we'll have three or four thousand reindeer."

Andrew Franklin said that the Association of Village Electric Corporation was going to install electric power in the village and that the village of Togiak was planning to acquire a freezing facility.

After the freezer unit has been installed, Franklin said the village was planning to butcher some reindeer and the meat would be sold to the villagers by the council.

"Stanley Active is the village president. He's a good president. He really is," said Franklin.

He said Stanley Active was in the process of planning the consumption of reindeer in the future and that in time each family would be able to consume about four reindeer a year.

"Togiak people willing to buy the meat. He figures every family can eat four reindeer in Togiak in a year," said Franklin.

He said Jack Gosuk was the head reindeer herder on Hagemeister Island 25 miles from Togiak.

Gosuk and his family are living on the island along with two other herders Sam Foster and Chris Bavilla.

"That Gosuk he sure, he does really like his job. I really appreciate that, too. I think we choose the right person," Franklin said.

He said the herd was taken care of all year round.

Andrew Franklin is taking a refresher course at the University of Alaska as a Head Start teacher–director for the village of Togiak along with 85 others from villages all over the state.

"Last year we had 21 in Head Start in Togiak," Franklin said. "Boy, they really go for that. Parents see the Head Start is good for them and good for their children.

"I was surprised, you know, 14 from last year are in first grade. You know what the teacher told me, they were ahead of their class. It made me feel real good.

"Anuska Togiak, she's my cousin, help teach. She said she was real proud of what we did."

Franklin said that the teacher –directors were taking a six-weeks course while the aides were taking a three-weeks course.