All animals, including reindeer, need veterinarians to help keep them healthy. It just so happens that Isaac Bott, a veterinarian in Springville, Utah, and a Utah State University alumnus, is a leading authority on reindeer health. He brought his expertise to Logan in early December for the USU School of Veterinary Medicine’s first ever Reindeer Express event to help Santa prepare his reindeer for their Christmas Eve flight.

Bott has gained international attention as he is currently the only veterinarian in the world who provides reproductive services for reindeer. He still remembers the exact day his work with reindeer began: March 28, 2010.

“I was just driving down the road one day, and I got a random phone call from a guy,” Bott said. “He said, ‘Hey Dr. Bott, I have a reindeer I think is pregnant and I wondered if you could come check her out.’ I thought, ‘Why not?'”

When Bott visited the farm, the reindeer was indeed pregnant – in fact she was in active labor. Thanks to his training and experiences growing up on a farm, Bott was able to successfully deliver the baby. When the owner later approached him with the idea of starting an artificial insemination program for reindeer, Bott didn’t hesitate.

“I just knew that was something I would absolutely love to do,” Bott said. “We had our work cut out for us. Up to the point when I started, there had been just one reindeer baby ever produced by artificial insemination. We definitely had some failures, and it was a trial and error process.”
In the spring of 2011 – almost exactly 1 year after his first encounter with reindeer – Bott successfully produced the world’s first female reindeer calf through artificial insemination. The calf’s name, Mira, stood for miracle.

Bott’s said his career has “been quite a fun adventure” and has led to opportunities he never imagined while in vet school. Bott has traveled across the world and, in addition to reindeer, has worked with other exotic animals, including water buffalo, mountain sheep and African lions.

As a full-time veterinarian and president of The Society of Theriogenology (veterinarians who specialize in reproduction), Bott rarely has time to take his reindeer to events like The Reindeer Express, but tries to provide educational opportunities whenever he can.

“I want people and vet students to learn about animals like reindeer and not be afraid to work with them,” Bott said. “They are just another mammal and species that I don’t think a veterinarian should be scared of working on. When they get a call for help, I want students to be able to say ‘Yes! Absolutely!’”

Bott also serves as the director of admissions for USU’s School of Veterinary Medicine and said one of his favorite things to do is talk to students. Vet school is demanding and one of Bott’s goals is to keep students excited about their future, even when they are bogged down with the stress that comes along with school.

To share his passion for veterinary medicine, Bott recently launched his own TV show, DocBott, that follows his adventures as a veterinarian. Viewers can see Bott work with puppies, llamas and everything in between.

“I want to share just as much as I can about veterinarians in general,” Bott said. “It’s not just about me, that’s something different about this show. What I really try to convey is how important it is to have a personal relationship with your veterinarian and trust in your veterinarian.”

Watch episodes of Doc Bott.