

HOWLER



SP Kennel Teams are racing now!

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SLED DOG RACING SEASON IS ON!

The Sheep Mountain 150 was the first race of the season. SP Kennel teams placed 2nd and 11th out of a field of 48 racers. The racing schedule continues throughout the winter.

The mid-distance racing season continues on January 14th with the Copper Basin 300 Sled Dog Race. This premier racing event will start in the town of Chistochina and travel 300 miles through the mountains and river valleys of south central Alaska. Allen will race the Black Team, Aliy will have the Red Team and Ryne will have a younger group of dogs on the R & B Team. There will be over 50 teams in the race. This event has always been a true test for the SP Kennel dogs and mushers.

The next scheduled race starts January 28th. Two SP Kennel Teams will compete in either the Don Bowers 300 or the Tustemena 200. The SP Kennel goals, planning, and logistics will determine which event the teams enter. The Don Bowers is a flat terrain race with generally deep snow in southern Alaska, whereas the Tustemena 200 is a mountainous race on the Alaskan Kenai Peninsula. There are several smaller races on the calendar as well: the Two Rivers Burger Run and the Two Rivers Funale. Once the mid-distance season is over, the long 1,000-mile races begin.

Butterscotch and Olivia Are Ready!



On February 4th, the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race starts in Fairbanks, Alaska. The finish is in Whitehorse, Canada - over 1,000 miles and 10 days later. Allen and the Black Team will compete in this event. The dogs and musher have to be in prime shape for this epic two-week adventure through arctic winter wilderness. This will be Allen's second time racing the Quest, and his attitude is great: "A thousand miles across wind-blown summits, frost covered mountains and frigid rivers.... what could possibly happen?"

Meet Chemo & I.V.

I.V. and Chemo are the youngest dogs in training this season, but watching them run in the team, you'd never know it that they were only yearlings.

They are training along side all of the 'big' dogs and seem unfazed by long miles and tough trail conditions. "I.V. is already showing leader potential," says Aliy. "She's a real driver and completely comfortable running up front." Chemo, the larger of the two, is quite the powerhouse, resembling his half-brother Moonpie. "We're excited to see how they mature this season," says Allen.



*A quick update on 9-year old Ava, who named Chemo and I.V.:
 Ava's last checkup was completely cancer free!*

RACING CONTINUES (Continued from front.)

“The Yukon Quest was truly an adventure last year. I have been thinking about the race a lot over the past year; why not see if we can improve?” -- Allen

A quick recap of last year’s Yukon Quest will remind everyone of the hazards and pitfalls of traveling this arctic wilderness trail during the winter:

- The race was extremely physically challenging and only 13 of the 25 teams were able to complete the course. (Allen placed 6th in 11 days and 7 hours.)
- A blizzard overwhelmed many of the racers on the Yukon River and forced some of them to turn back and quit the race entirely.
- The temperatures plummeted during the last third of the race, and teams were dealing with 50 and 60 degrees *below* zero!
- Cold temperatures were amplified by the emergence of overflow (flowing water on top of river ice). Cold wet hands, paws and gear were race-ending disasters for several teams.
- Only 150 miles from the finish, the first and second place teams failed to climb Eagle Summit - a notoriously steep, wind blown summit, ending their race for good.

The Yukon Quest is always exciting. Stay tuned on February 4th!

WHAT TO PACK FOR A RACE?

We always talk about race strategies, trail conditions, and dogs, but how about all the gear? While some of the equipment is standard cold weather gear, most is unique to sled dogs and mushing. So, what is on our supply list for long distance races?

DOG GEAR

- underbelly ruffs (to protect the hairless areas of male dogs)
- wind jackets (both male and female)
- fleece-lined jackets
- dog booties (1,400 booties for a 1,000-mile race)
- leggings (to protect dogs from sticky wet snow)
- dog harnesses
- fleece tosses (to lay over a pair of resting dogs at a checkpoint)
- t-shirts (to keep muscles warm while running)
- shoulder jackets (equipped with pockets for hand warmers to keep a heat source on shoulder muscles)
- cooler (to prepare dog food and keep it warm)
- dog bowls/scooper (everyone needs their own dog dish!)
- snacks (fish, beef, turkey skins, fat balls... yummy)



HUMAN GEAR

- multiple sets of gloves (dry gloves are *essential*)
- socks (wet feet...a definite possibility)
- Northern Outfitters parka with fur ruff, liner, bibs, and boots
- beaver mitts (worn over a liner glove)
- neck gaiters
- goggles (for high wind and snow)
- beaver hat
- headlight (for the 18 hours of darkness per day)
- hand and toe warmers (these are not just for sissies)
- Northern Outfitters wind jacket and pants (The “NO” gear is breathable - allowing you to stay dry - but therefore more susceptible to the wind)
- ski pole (to increase speed and stay warm)
- knife
- 1/2 gallon insulated water jug (hydration is *critical*)
- human snacks (Payday, Baby Ruths or granola bars... depending upon your craving)

Spotlight on the “S” Litter!



This year, the four dogs in the “S” Litter--Scooter, Sissy, Schmoe and Spoo-- are some of SPK’s most promising two-year olds. Three of the four competed in the Sheep Mountain 150, and all are on track to race more this season. Tireless, enthusiastic, playful, and a bit goofy looking, these youngsters keep us on our toes!



About SP Kennel

Skunk’s Place (SP) Kennel is a premier sled dog racing kennel in Two Rivers, AK.

We are dedicated to the individual dog through excellent health, nutrition, training and specialized care.

We strive to be good-will ambassadors for the sport of sled dog racing, balancing winning performance with exceptional sportsmanship, community outreach and advocacy for the amazing Alaskan Husky.

Upcoming Schedule:

- January 14th -- Copper Basin 300
- January 28th -- 200 or 300 Mile Race
- February 4th -- Yukon Quest
- March 3rd -- Iditarod
- April -- Natural Extremes Trips

“Thank you!” to all our dog sponsors, supporters, family, friends and fans!

