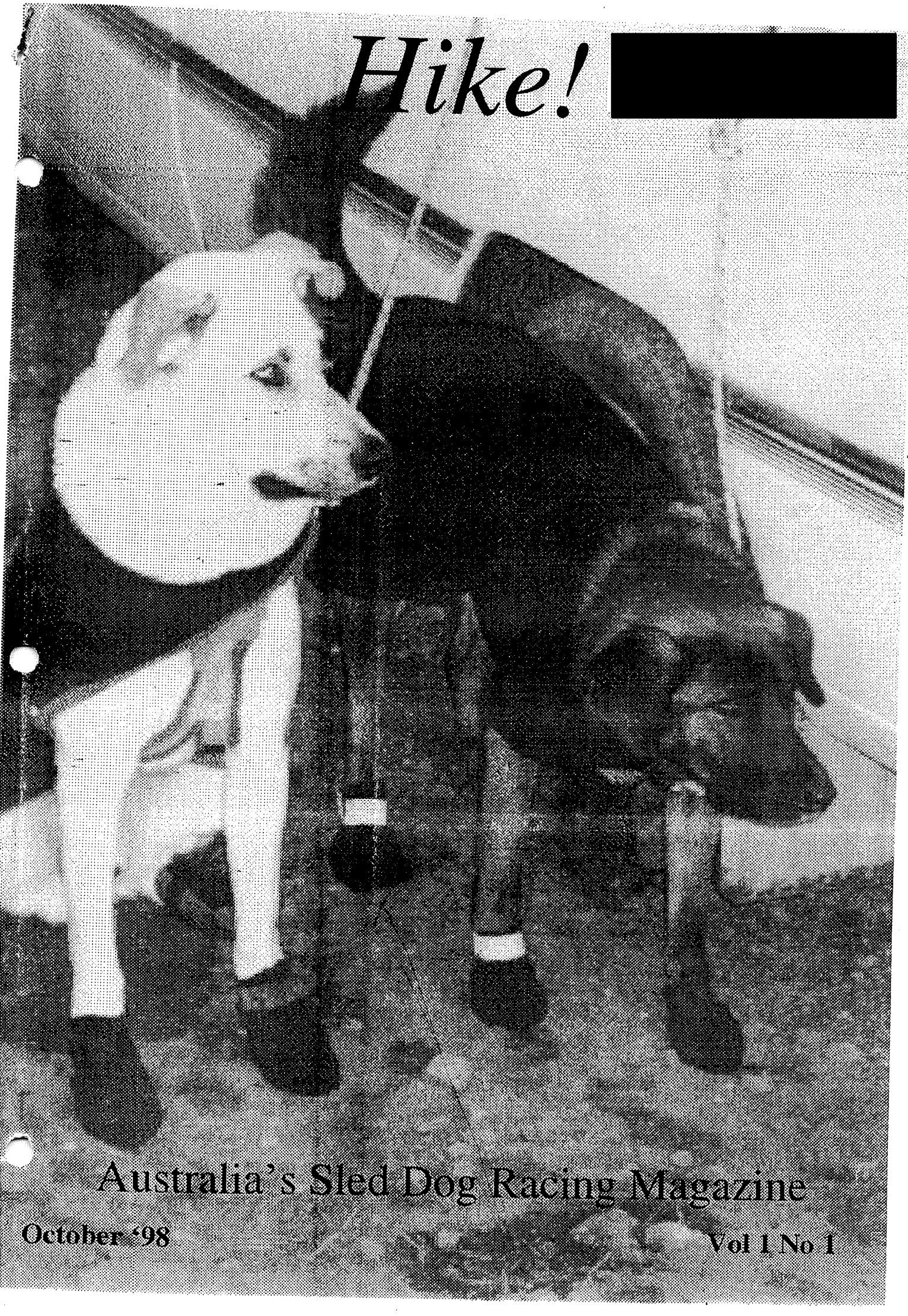
Hike!



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October '98

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Hike!

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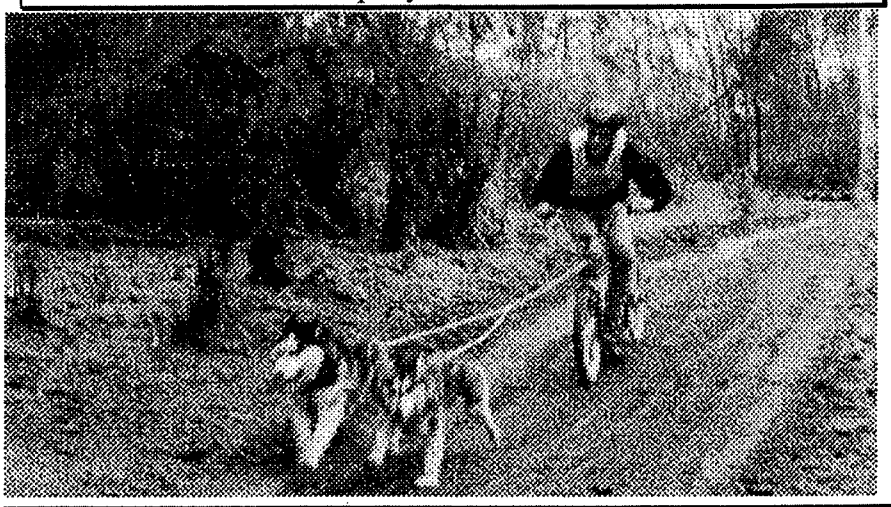


About this Magazine

Welcome to the first edition of *Hike!*, a monthly magazine devoted to the promotion of sled dog training and racing.

While this magazine is supported by the resources of the Due South Sled Dog Racing Team (more about that in this issue!) it is not a club newsletter. Instead we are aiming to produce a magazine devoted to the sport of sled dog racing - produced for racers by racers.

We hope that this magazine will become a useful resource - a one stop shop where you can obtain all the relevant race information, entry forms, and race results - as well as interesting articles from around Australia and internationally about the sport of sled dog racing.

We will also not shy away from the controversial issues - as it is often these very issues that are most important for the future success of this infant sport. Each edition will include an regular column entitled 'Kontroversy Korner' - we hope this article will become a forum for these issues to be addressed up-front and in the open by you the readers.

Of course, the big attraction of this edition is the results of the inaugural *Hike!* Sprint Race Point Score. There are some surprises and some pretty predictable outcomes. If you want to check the calculations contact the Editor and we'll send them to you.

I hope that once you've read this initial free copy you'll decide its worth the investment and fill out the subscription form at the back. The initial subscription rate of $25 per year, is pretty steep and we are hoping to be able to bring it down as advertising revenue increases. We will also be seeking to improve the quality of the publication if resources allow.

Its an ambitious project and can really only succeed with your support - not just through subscriptions and advertising - but also through the contribution of articles and comment.

I hope you come on board!

Peter Komidar

Credits

This magazine could not have been brought to you without the efforts of:

Production Crew A&L Gersbach

Sharon Komidar - NZ Dusk to Dawn

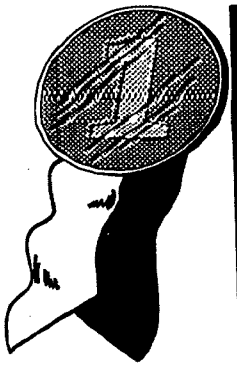
Geoff Carter - Polar Manual

C & V Bittendorfer - A New Disease

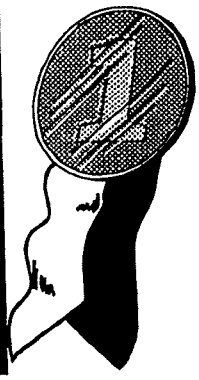
Doug Marshak - Kennel Flooring

Karyn Colman - Anaesthesia in Northern Breeds

Cover: Sibe-Hound Crosses bootied up and ready to run the NZ Dusk to Dawn Race Photo: Sharon Komidar



Hike! 1998 National Sprint Champions



Welcome to first *Hike!* annual national sprint race point score results. Here's how it works.

The point score methodology used is fairly simple. The formula is 1000 x winner's time (in seconds) divided by the competitor's time.

In other words each competitor is ranked as a proportion of the time of the winner. This means that we don't need to worry about individual characteristics of particular tracks (eg preventing the incentive for people to concentrate on races with flat tracks to get faster times - to the detriment of other more hilly, sandy or wet tracks).

The total points are accrued over the best 4 races (we picked 4 so that mushers from SA and Qld could have a chance of being involved - and also that we don't skew the results in favour of `petrol-mushers' who can afford to attend more races and therefore beef up their scores - even though they run like donkeys).

Thus the most points a musher can get is 4000 (that is by coming first in four races).

The following national sprint races were used:

- Southern Cross Pro Am
- Underra Sled Dog Dash
- Sydney Sled Dog Sprint
- Northern Exposure
- Great Grey Bound
- Wild Dog Derby
- Sydney Sled Dog Shield
- Bannockburn
- Canberra Sled Dog Classic

You will notice that the Southern Highlands Mid Distance Race and the Altitude 5000 race were not selected. This was done on the basis that the Freight Run was not representative of a true sprint race and because the snow race did not include a one-dog class. (The latter hich was a very hard decision for me personally seeing as my best results of the season were at A5000!).

These rules are by no means the only way a point score could be run. And in fact some anomalies were shown up in the results.

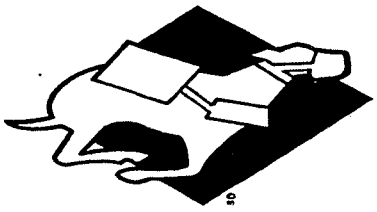
Firstly, only a small proportion of the total field actually attended 4 races - including many people who alternated between classes.

This latter problem was highlighted by the case of Terry Mace who alternated between the 6 and 4 dog classes. In the end he only participated in 3 four dog events and even though he won 2 of them he does not appear in the point score! Meanwhile because there were not 4 6-dog events this year he missed out on this category as well!

Obviously, there is room for improvement in the methodology - should we for instance move to a best of three formula for 1999? However, on the face of it 3 races is a small sample on which to judge a national champion!

I would welcome any suggestions on how to improve the methodology for the 1999 Point Score!

But enough of the explanatory notes - here's the results.



One Dog

D Kent	4000	1
J Dalziel	3765	2
K Glaser	3756	3
M Herbst	3709	4
T Taylor	3684	5
A Babazogli	3682	6
S Blanch	3620	7
D Baker	3557	8
R Coverdale	3538	9
D Debono	3510	10

Two Dog

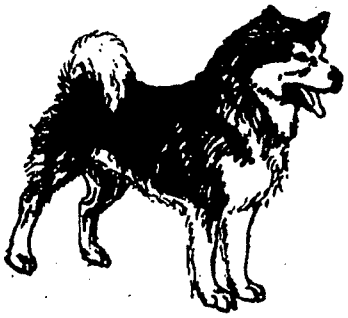
L Coutts	4000	1
O Robertson	3961	2
C Bittendorfer	3794	3
D Hodgson	3786	4
M Waldock	3596	5
H Cordani	3544	6
S Hodgkinson	3497	7
D Skakel	3493	8
H Coutts	3486	9
I Douglas	3475	10

Limited Four Dog Class

F Jensen	3981	1
M Blockley	3970	2
W Baker	3778	3
M Waldock	3727	4
J Hodgson	3693	5
D Pettifer	3550	6
K McCarthy	3539	7
A Babazogli	3079	8
R Koch	2963	9
C Turner	2429	10

Congratulations to all National Top Ten Champions.

Peter Komidar



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Or contact Sharon Smith at

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47 Nichols Road, Kinglake West, Victoria 3757
Phone/Fax (03) 5786-5075

The Due South Sled Dog Racing Team

Andrew and Lisa Gersbach — Black Ice
Clem Kyle and Andrea Quarterman — Running Bear
Geoff, Tim and Tracy Carter — Serum Run
Peter and Sharon Komidar — Siberpunks

On Friday 28 August 1998 the Due South Sled Dog Racing Team was formally voted into existence. Due South consists of nine sled dog racing fanatics from the Canberra region:

Due South is not a Sled Dog Club and has a closed membership. The major aim of the team is to assist members in attaining a more professional standard of Sled Dog training and racing.

Due South has already obtained sponsorship from Eureka. We have also found some private training trails in the foothills of the Brindabellas. In addition we've commenced compilation of a team racing and training manual library and have purchased our first communal sprint sled.

As well as running in most (if not all) of the 1999 sprint races, Due South will also be staging its own sled dog race in 1999. In fact, negotiations have been under way for some months in this regard.

During the 1998 racing season and before the team was formally instituted, team members were involved in extensive negotiations with the NSW Government in an effort to stage a snow race in NSW in 1999.

Alas, our best efforts were in the end unsuccessful. However, as part of the process we were able to garner a hefty amount of support and good will for the cause - both within Government circles and by local businesses and communities. So now we move onto Plan B.

Plan B essentially involves the staging of a sprint race in the Australian Alps - but outside of the National Parks. It will be a scooter/rig race - unless we are lucky to have a dump of snow at the right time! More details on the race will follow in future editions of *Hike!* when all the `i's are dotted an the `t's are crossed. If we can make this race a real success then our chances of staging a snow race within the National Park in the year 2000 can only be enhanced!

And last but not least, the resources of Due South have been pooled to produce Australia's first national mushing magazine.

As you can imagine, we've set ourselves some pretty tough goals and the workload is going to be pretty hefty in the lead up to the 1999 season. But what the heck, its all part of the fun of the crazy addictive sport.

Peter Komidar

A NEW DISEASE

(Author unknown)

We have identified a new disease ,probably caused by a virus among sled dog owning people. It apparently has been in existence for a considerable time, but only recently has anyone identified this disease, and begun to study it. We call it the Acquired Canine Obsessive Syndrome (ACOS). At first, ACOS was originally considered to be psychological in nature, but after two young researchers here suddenly decided to become racers, we realised that we were dealing with an infectious agent. Epidemiologists here have identified three stages of this disease and typical symptoms, they are:

A. You have early symptoms (stage 1) if :

1. You think that any race within 800 km is near by.
2. You begin to enjoy getting up at 3am to train and feed dogs
3. You think you're being frugal if you spend less than $3,000 a year on races
4. Its fun to spend several hours checking feet and untangling harnesses
5. You cant remember what it is like to have only one dog.

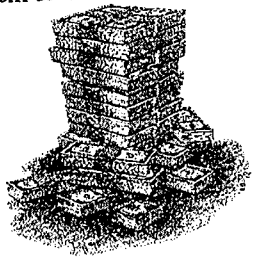
B. You definitely have the disease (stage 2) if:

1. The most important factor when buying a truck is how many dog boxes you can fit on it.
2. When you look for a house, the first thing you think of is how many dogs you can kennel on the property.
3. Your dog food bill is higher than your family's.
4. You spend as much on veterinarians as on doctors.
5. You have no money because of racing dogs
6. You have to buy more than one vehicle a year, because you keep burning out the 7 year or 100,000 km warranty going to races.
7. You have more pictures of your team than family.
8. Your idea of a fun holiday is to hit the race circuit.
9. Most of your conversations revolve around the dogs and trail conditions.

C. You are terminal (stage 3) if:

1. You wake up in the morning and find out you put the kids in the kennel and the dogs in bed last night.
2. You know each dogs name and pedigree, but cant figure out who that stranger in the house is - your husband/wife.
3. Your neighbours insist that those kids running around the house bothering the dogs are yours.
4. Your family tells you " Its either us or the dogs " and you choose the dogs.

Submitted by:
Clem & Veronica Bittendorfer



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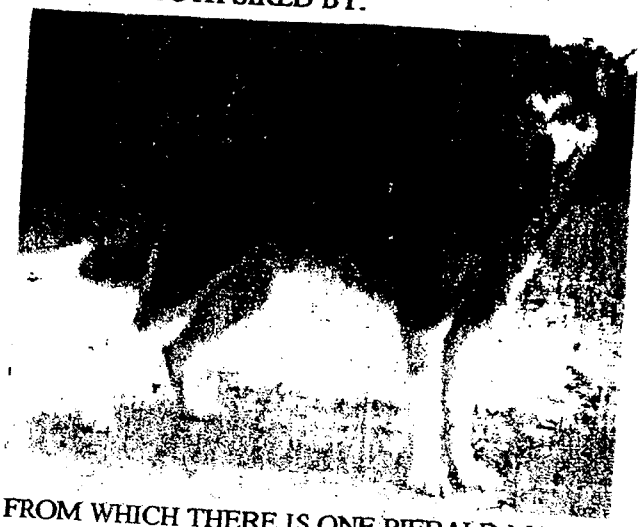

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CHUVASHKAYA KENNELS FEEDS AND RECOMMENDS
ROYAL CANIN

Kontroversy Korner

This is the first in a regular series of articles focussing on controversial issues of concern to the sled dog racing community. We hope this column will become a forum for these issues to be addressed up-front and in the open by you the readers. Accordingly, we would welcome any of your comments on the issues raised in this article - they will be reprinted in the next edition.

However, while we will be encouraging debate on serious issues we won't allow the column to degenerate into a forum for negative flame wars. That would nott be in the interests of the magazine or the sport!

We've started small in the first edition - focussing on an issue which won't exactly make the blood boil - but is one that is often discussed on the trails.

Scooter Wheels - is bigger necessarily better?

With every racing season, more and more 24 and even 26 inch wheeled scooters appear on the scene. In fact, most scooter manufacturers now produce a large wheeled scooter as a matter of course. However, are bigger wheeled scooters necessarily faster?

Now on a chain driven bike, the bigger the wheels the easier it is to turn the pedals and therefore the more efficient and fast the bike. There is complex physics which underlies this proposition. And because I don't understand it, I'll just take it for granted that the experts know what they are talking about. The problem for me, however, is that scooters don't use pedal power - and therefore the physics doesn't count.

Winners are Grinners

There's no denying that a significant proportion of the top 10 mushers in both the one and two dog class use big wheeled scooters. Surely that proves that bigger wheels are better. Well maybe not. It could be the case that its not the big wheeled scooters that are enabling them to win the races - but rather that people in the top ten are more likely to buy scooters they think will win. In other words it might tell us more about the psychology of top 10 mushers than about the speed of their scooters.

A Scientific Experiment

In the interests of science and as a result of maybe too much time on their hands. A group of Due South mushers and other volunteers undertook an experiment on the Saturday afternoon of the Southern Highlands Freight Race. Using Hill's Hill as a testing range, we launched ourselves down the hill at top speed - using small and big wheeled scooters. The results were inconclusive and we went away with the conclusion that maybe a downhill testing range is not the best as factors like weight and fool-hardiness seem to be the prime determining factors.

Could it be the Bearings?

We all know that street bikes have better bearings than BMXs - just spin the wheel & see for yourself. The bearings in bigger wheels are also higherr from the ground and therefore less likely to get filled with dust and mud.

Could it be the bearing and not the size of the wheel that makes the difference (if there is a difference)? This idea was put to me by Henry Cordani. His theory is that not only do bigger wheels have better bearings, they also cover more ground per revolution of the bearing (because the circumference of the wheel is bigger). Therefore the bearings (which are already better to start off with) do not wear out so quick. But more importantly there is less resistance, in the way of bearing friction, for each metre covered - and therefore a speed advantage.

Sounds kosher to me. But the big question is - is the difference significant? How much time savings are we talking about. Are we talking seconds - if so, I'm getting a big wheeled scooter this afternoon! Or are we talking fractions of a second (in which case I'll just put in one extra scoot and save my money).

Lawrie Coutts - National 1998 Two-Dog Champion - and big-wheeled scooter

The Jury is Still Out.

If you expected some answers in this article, you'll be disappointed. However, I did manage to dig up some questions. What is your view? Is bigger faster? If so, do you have an explanation as to why? We'd love to hear from you - just phone, email, fax or write to the newsletter (details in the inside front cover).

Peter Komidar

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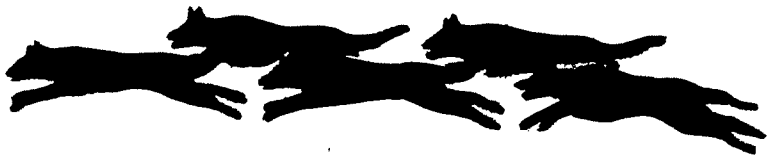

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Polar Manual

The original edition of the Polar Manual was prepared by the US Department of Cold Weather Medicine of the US Naval Medical School as a guide for personnel whose duties take them to the Polar Regions. This series of articles shows the humorous and yet informative nature of this now very rare resource manual.

Dogs Dos and Don'ts

1. Don't lie down near an untied team - they may mistake you for a seal.
2. If you fear a dog he can smell it, and gentle overtures to gain his friendship may cost a hand.
3. Even if you love ALL dogs (and they like you), don't spoil the other fellow's team by over-attention to his dogs, and don't spoil a strain he may be trying to perfect by letting your dogs run wild.
4. In dishing out a pat or a roughening to your team, treat all as equals - dogs resent favouritism.
5. Doubled whips or whip handles break up dogfights more quickly and far more safely than hands and with less damage to the dogs than axe handles.
6. Don't leave rags soaked in animal fats about camp. Dog eats rag, rag blocks dog's gut, dog dies.
7. Don't use dogs at elevations over 8,000-10,000 feet; they don't do well.
8. Don't use dogs to break trail for tractors, for they easily cross crevasse bridges which will not support tractors.
9. NEVER defecate upwind and in sight of a dog team. Their pursuit of delicacies may lead to painful bites, and man neither runs or dodges well with his pants around his ankles.

Geoff Carter

ANTI FREEZE POISONING

Few may be aware of the dangers of anti freeze. Less than a teaspoon will kill a dog. The problem with anti-freeze is that it tastes good to dogs. Also, people are always topping up in lay-byes and service stations and not worrying about the over spill.

Traditionally, plain old drinking alcohol has been used and is said to work well if given in a timely manner. They use 80 proof rum fed into the stomach by a tube. But now there is a new antidote.

Antizol-Vet (commonly known as 4MP) is an antidote for ethylene glycol poisoning in dogs. Ethylene glycol is the poisonous chemical component of antifreeze and coolants. While assessments of the number of ethylene glycol poisonings vary, Orphan Medical estimates that there are approximately 10,000 dogs that could benefit from this antidote therapy each year in the United States alone. If administered early enough, Antizol-Vet can prevent the severe clinical consequences of ethylene glycol ingestion, including death

Perhaps the next time you visit your vet you can inform them of this new product.

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http://www.webheads.co.uk/sleddog/ezine/indexmain.htm

Anaesthesia in Northern Breeds

By Karyn Colman B.Vet.Med. M.R.C.V.S.

I make the following recommendations to those who ask:

Give the vet the exact weight of the dog or ensure he/she weighs the dog prior to administering any pre-med. IMO the commonest cause of problems with anaesthesia in Northern breeds is over-estimation the weight of the dog because of the dense coat and because some vets don't appreciate that these dogs are athletes - i.e. have minimal fat reserves. And in some cases with Malamutes because they had problems handling the dog so gave it an over-generous dose of pre-med. Giving too much pre-med will also cause slow recovery rates & a very wobbly, groggy dog, the pre-med takes longer to be removed from the system than any of the commonly used anaesthetics.

Ask specifically for the ultra-short acting injectable anaesthetic agents such as those frequently used in greyhounds, Salukis, Afghans, etc., these are the best type for athletic dogs with minimal fat covering. The generic names for two of these are - PROPOFOL & METHOHEXITONE. Athletic dogs often require less anaesthetic agent per lb body weight than couch-potatoes and seem to react better to a single, conservative 'bolus' 'knock-down' dose followed by rapid intubation & gaseous top-up than to repeated doses of injected anaesthetic. Injectable anaesthetics are generally used for induction of the anaesthesia & then a gaseous agent is used for maintenance. There is little difference between the different types of gaseous anaesthetic as far as recovery times are concerned - most are mainly 'blown off' by re-excretion via the lungs with only very limited metabolism in the body.

Adverse reactions to pre-med & anaesthetics that have been administered correctly & with due care are actually fairly infrequent, and are often an idiosyncratic reaction which cannot be predicted.

It is my strong belief & contention that Northern breeds are no more sensitive to anaesthetics than other athletic type of dog and their risk of injury due to anaesthesia administration is no greater than any other breed of dog, if correctly dosed.

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http://www.webheads.co.uk/sleddog/ezine/indexmain.htm

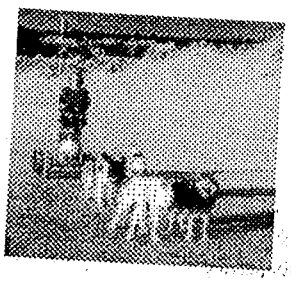
Sled Dog Sports J - The Oregon Dune Mushers Mail Run

Continuing a 21 year tradition, dog sled drivers harnessed their enthusiastic animals to their distinctive 4-wheeled carts on the morning of Friday 6 March 1998 and mushed to the doorsteps of North Bend City Hall. There the drivers collected commemorative envelopes and were off for a weekend of dune mushing.

Margaret Black and team as they round a bend. Margaret is a senior research scientist at a large company in Washington state

This unusual event commemorates a period of time when ships and horse drawn carriages were the main form of transportation along the South Coast of Oregon and the beaches were used as highways. In fact, in Oregon the beaches still come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transportation.

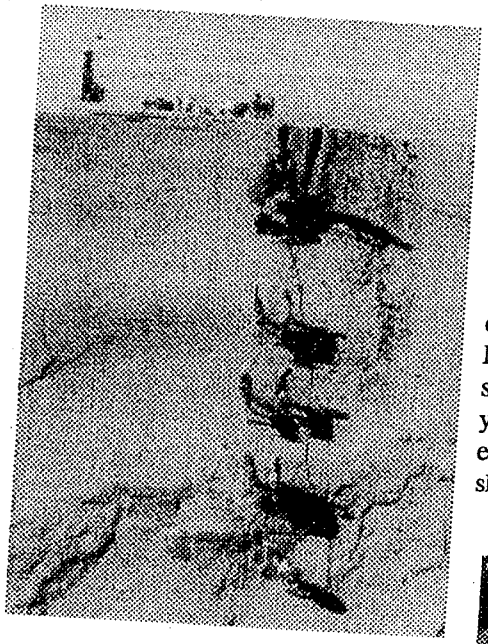
The 120 kilometre Mail Run, a non-competitive endurance run, is believed to be the world's longest organised non-snow run for sled dogs. The trail takes mushers and their teams over roads, trails, beaches and huge sand dunes.



Diane Fisher and her 4 Siberians somewhere in the Dunes. Diane is a housewife in her upper 50s.

The 'Mini Teams' of 3-5 dogs start on the Friday morning. The larger teams of 6-10 dogs start the following day on Saturday. The teams parade through a number of towns on the way - and are a great drawcard for spectators. The stamped envelopes carried by the mushers are sold to spectators as a fund raiser for the club. The money is used to send mushers to sled dog races including the Iditarod.

However, the mushers don't see the event as just another fund raiser. It's also a great way for them to condition and train their dogs for the snow events. Club secretary Bev Meyers said that the sand is three times more difficult than snow for the dogs to run through and helps the dogs build the muscle needed for racing.



One event I'll never forget is Sylvia holding her brand new video camera by one hand, the steering wheel by the other, and plunging literally straight down a dune. It's on film folks! Dina Lund

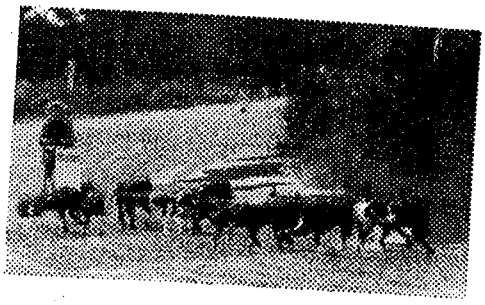
"We have a lot of dogs that do a lot of racing," Meyer said. "Between the water crossings and the quicksand, they learn real good control and commands, and have a lot of contact with people. It slows them down. But when they get back on snow, it is much easier for them and they really take off."

Steve Loper and his Samoyeds out on the Dunes

The dog teams vary from three to 12 dogs in size. The smaller the team, the larger the dogs said Meyers, who uses Alaskan Malamutes for her team.

The Oregon Mushers begin the rigorous sand dune training in the fall, when the rain comes and packs the sand and train winter into spring when the dunes dry out.

"We start with short runs, a mile or two, and build up from there," Meyers said. "By Christmas you should be up to your distance. Then you continue training to keep the endurance up and the muscles in shape



Mark Stamm and his Alaskans. Mark is a professional racer and found running in the sand a real challenge.

Peter Komidar

THE NEW ZEALAND DUSK TO DAWN SLEDDOG RACE

Sharon Komidar

The Dusk to Dawn Sled Dog Race was held over the weekend of the 18th and 19th of July in some spectacular pine forests just outside Taupo in the north island of New Zealand and I was fortunate enough to be able to attend.

It was called the Dusk to Dawn because that exactly what it was. It involved five different heats which were run at 5pm, 9pm, 1am, 5am with the final leg starting at 9am the following morning. The 2 dog class only ran the first, third and fifth legs, the 3, 4 and 6 dog classes actually ran all five heats. Which meant that there was a 6 hour gap between heats for the 2 dog class and between each of the five heats for the larger classes there was a 3 hour gap.

The race was held in one of the largest forests in the Southern Hemisphere and that means that they are really spoiled for tracks, (although the tracks themselves are mostly pumice which means that the dogs must be booted for most races) and the race organisers really took advantage of the fact with each leg of the race being run on a completely different track!

I eagerly awaited the start of the first leg of the race, I wanted to see what they did differently and what was simular. Four things really took me by surprise. Firstly they don't seem to get the sponsorship dollars that we get in Australia. Indeed when they looked at the pictures that I'd brought from home they were amazed at all the sponsorship banners and bunting at the start and finish chutes. This made me realise that we are very lucky in Australia that we have the support of so many interested individuals and businesses.

Secondly, no-one used a scooter in the 2 dog classes, everyone was on a rig. But what rigs they were! There was an amazing collection of some best looking rigs I have ever seen. I was extremely impressed.

Thirdly, Peter (not my Peter, another one who apparently falls off about as much as mine does) missed his start altogether and all he got was a 30 second penalty.!, The race officials seemed to think it was enough of a handicap.

Finally, the dogs themselves. They do of course race Sibes and Mals (although there was no Mals at this race), but they also race pointers, hounds, and a great variety of cross-breeds. The cross-breeds were for the main Sibes crossed with other breeds. They were pretty special looking. just imagine a dog that resembles a sleek looking hound looking at you with two of the most beautiful blue eyes I have every seen. See this months fount cover for some of the other dogs. The team that was the overall winner of the race and winner of the 4 dog class consisted of German wire-hair pointers that belonged to the Peter mentioned above. These dogs were awesome to say the least. After finishing all five legs of the race (approx 60 km) they still have enough energy to race back to the camp and pose for photos and eat a few bones.

Prior to the race starting and between each heat there were mandatory vet checks for all dogs. Kirsten, the vet, was the race vet for many of the races held in that part of New Zealand and when she asked for a volunteer to be her scribe I was more than happy to do it to see just what went on. She systematically checked each dog, there paws, hydration, heart rate and circulation, rating every dog in each category. If she found that any dog was dehydrated, even only mildly, then that particular dog had to be checked again before allowed out on the next leg of the race.

The night passed very quickly, the next leg would start and the dogs would vanish into the night. But by the time we have gone and got a cup of coffee and a muffin, (the food was hot and in plentiful supply all night!) the first of the teams would be returning. Each leg was about 12 km long and the first teams were posting very fast times. Then the booties were removed from the dogs and they were watered and allowed a 30 minutes rest before being presented to the vet. The mushers would then have a short rest before putting the booties back on the dogs (a long process with the bigger teams, and an expensive one as well, the pumice would render the booties useless after each leg which meant that a new set had to be used every time, some mushers went through 70-80 booties in the one night) and then they would set out again.

The final leg of the race was at 9am in the morning and the track followed alongside a landing strip in the middle of the forest. I have a vivid memory of a clear blue sky, and the sun shining on the frost (the ground temperature was -minus 16 during the coldest part of the night), and being able to see every single team as they raced into the distance alongside the landing strip on their way home.

There are lots of people to thank for making this adventure very special and the special people that we met in New Zealand must top the list. A big thanks must go David Rawnsley for putting it altogether. It was really nice to put the name to the email address! Another big thanks must go to Peter who almost met us at the airport and befriended us and explained about NZ beer and let us cuddle his dogs. And to every one else that we met, thank you for being so friendly and generous and making the race an event to remember.

Left: The winning German wire-hair Pointer Team after 60 km!

Is your decision on kennel flooring set in CONCRETE

Read this before constructing those new kennels

By Doug Marshak

Kennel surfaces are an important part of designing a healthy kennel for your team. While most mushers are more concerned about the health of their animals during a run, it is equally important to maintain the health of the dogs at rest. The healthier your dogs are at the start of a race, the better they will perform.

Dirt vs. concrete

Often debated are the kinds of surfaces the musher should provide for the dogs. Traditionally, most mushers use dirt, for the simple reason that it's already there. Recently I have heard some debate as to the use of concrete as a kennel surface. Concrete can reduce maintenance time, but it has several other qualities that may make it undesirable.

The advantage of concrete lies basically in the lack of maintenance involved after it's been laid. The traditional complaints of holes, rain wash-out, and mud are eliminated through the use of concrete. Obviously,' dogs cannot dig through it, making it not only safer for the musher to manage the kennel, but also safer for the dogs by reducing the chance of injuries caused by falling into these holes. The 'hole' problem of dirt can be exacerbated by rainfall leading to large wash-out areas within the kennel, which means even more maintenance for the musher.

Parasites a problem

One of the unique features of a dog sledding kennel is that it is a rare opportunity to apply population medicine to companion animals. Parasites are traditionally a major concern only in production animals; but in a sled dog kennel, a large number of animals are concentrated in a relatively small area. Parasitic infectious disease can result in decreased weight gain for the dogs in the off season, depleting energy stores and reducing performance during the racing season. It is in the best interest of mushers to reduce the spread of parasites in the kennel.

A traditional advantage that concrete surface proponents have advocated is cleanliness. A concrete surface is quite easy to clean, provided you have a place to put the dogs while you are cleaning it. A bleach solution is easily applied to help sterilise the surface periodically. Properly designed with gutters, a. kennel can be cleansed of faecal matter and urine in a short time by a high- pressure hose. On a sunny or windy day the surface will dry quickly.

Not a cure-all

However, we should be cautious in proclaiming the effectiveness of concrete In reducing parasitic disease. Dr. Jerry Vanek, president of the International Sled Dog Veterinary Medical Association, notes there is little research available that demonstrates just how effective concrete is at reducing infectious disease, and that most of hat is available is anecdotal.

According to Dr. Vanek, "Concrete does have microscopic holes in its surface for harbouring critters. In addition, concrete sweats, so its not always as dry as one would imagine.' He also points out that puppies get roundworms and hookworms from the dam, and that a clean surface is riot necessarily a cure-all for infectious disease.

Degenerative joint disease

There are other disease conditions that a musher should take into consideration before deciding on a concrete surface. Though I pen3onally have not heard any stories involving Increased occurrence of degenerative joint disease (DJD) in sled dogs, it certainly would seem that geriatric sled dogs would be at increased risk for this condition.

DJD is a pathological condition, in which the articular surfaces of the joints degrade, usually resulting in painful arthritis. It is most commonly seen as a sequel to damage to the 'joints in diseases such as osteochondrosis or trauma. However, one of the predisposing factors to development of DJD is extensive use of the joints such as in athletic animals, especially those with slight joint form abnormalities. Housing on an unforgiving surface such as concrete has the potential to cause further damage to the joint. Because sled dogs usually are active for years, they are at a unique risk for developing this, while most other canines may not be. Again, I have not personally heard of any sled dogs developing this disease, but the risk is there. A concrete surface may cause more animals in the kennel to develop clinical signs later in life, animals not previously seen because of the relative lack of use of concrete as a kennel surface.

Bad sores

The other physical ailment that a musher using concrete will most certainly see is decubital ulcers, or 'bedsores.' These are sores caused by lying on an unforgiving surface. They usually occur around bony protuberances such as the elbow and hip joints. While they cause little pain when the joint is moved, they can be a source of irritation for the dog, resulting in self induced trauma from chewing or licking the sores. Many people dislike the condition for its unsightliness, as well.

Observe caution

In summary, concrete provides some advantages over a natural surface for a kennel. However, one should be cautious in believing some of the so-called advantages it provides. While simplifying several components of kennel management, it can create several other problems that if not property managed can create an entirely new source of headaches for the musher. A decision to invest in an expensive kennel surface should be done cautiously, considering all of the consequences and potential problems.

Doug Marshak is a fourth-year Veterinary student at Me University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine. An avid mushing enthusiast, he completed a research project, 'Animal Welfare in Dog Sledding- during the summer of 1996 under the mentorship of Dr. Jerry Vanek, DVM, the current President of Me ISDVMA. He plans to practice in either the Upper Mid-west or Colorado after he receives his degree in June 1998.

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http://www.webheads.co.uk/sleddog/ezine/indexmain.htm