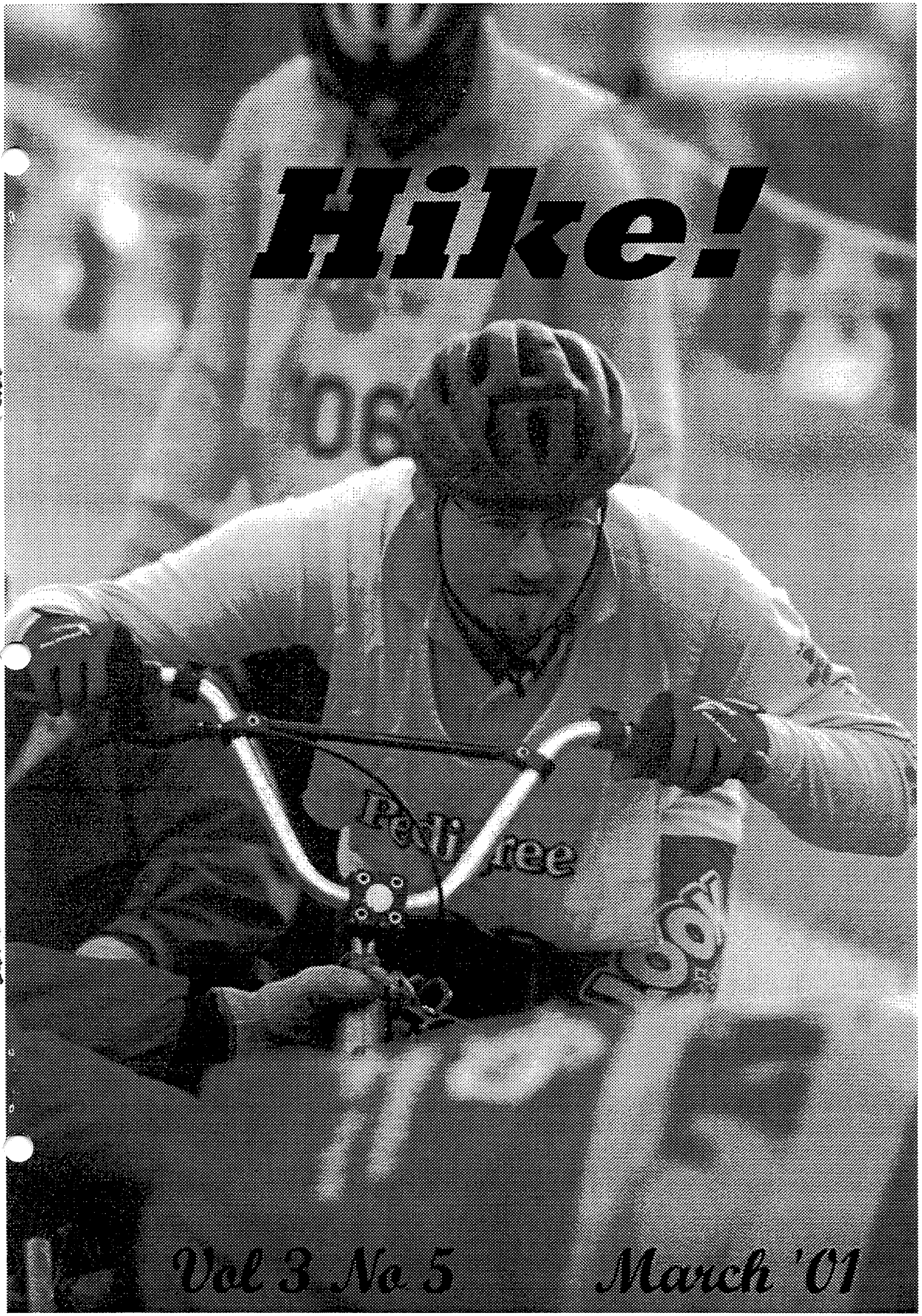
Hike!



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Mushing In Spain

Pep Parés
IFSS Gazette

Spain (Real Federation Española Dpeortes de Invierno – RFEDI) has been accepted as a the 26th national member of the IFSS. In this article Pep Parés presents mushing in Spain.

About 14 years ago pure breed Nordic dogs began to be seen in Spain. Malamutes were the most frequent in the first races. They ran obviously very slowly and created a lot of relationship troubles among dogs. Later on, Spanish mushers began to buy beautiful Huskies, Samoyeds and Greenlanders. Huskies began to spread and almost everybody finished racing with pure breed huskies. Mushers entered different FITSC European and world championships. The mushers Alejo Sabugo, Santi Campos, Ramon Rojas, Pep Parés and Josep Martínez were on the international podium.

Since 1991 the middle distance race named Pirena acquired more and more renown in the media until it became a real prime mover of our sport, the most important event in the snow fields in Spain. The TVs showed pretty images of our dogs and nature, and all this made mushing grow in our country. We could never separate the history of Pirena from that of mushing in Spain.

In Spain the Federations began to be interested in this sport, and they organised the first regional leagues. In 1993 the first Spanish Championship took place supported by the Coordinating Committee of sleddog clubs in Spain. Later on many other were organised almost always with the technical and promotional support of Pirena.

In 1993 Pirena only accepted pure breed dogs, but in that year it let Dodo Perri, the first sled team with Alaskan Huskies who came to Spain, run run outside of the pure breed classification and two years later Monique Bené also did so. Spanish mushers began to get used to seeing the Alaskan Huskies working. In 1998 Pirena opened its doors to all dogs. The federations and musher clubs also did the same.

At present in Spain there are many important dog teams from the best breeding kennels in the world from Alaska, Canada, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, France,; and there are great mushers: Josep Domingo, Albert Merino, Miquel Àngel Martínez, Jesús Raigoso, Salvador Luque, Gregoio Del Real, Pablo Núñez, Carles Franch, Xavier Martí, Joan Grifoll, Ramon Rojas, more than 40 teams in the Open Class. In the regional leagues all mushing classes participate with 8, 6, 4, 2 and one dog classes. Only canicross [ie runjoring Ed.] is missing from the competitions on earth. In total we could speak of about 230 teams, which usually take part in one or another regional or national event. At present there are about fifteen clubs spread all over Spain.

The Spanish musher Juan Alcina must be singled out. He ran in Pirena 1992 with a team of malamutes and finished the Iditarod 2000 in 15th place. It is a good example of how a man can see his dream accomplished!!

There are many mushers who race without a federative licence. If all these mushers got that official license, we could get more help from the Spanish sport authorities.

In 1999 the first formal contact between the RFEDI and the European Sled Dog Racing Association (ESDRA) took place. Personally I Invited Mr Bernard Pépin to Barcelona so that he could hold a high level meeting with the RFEDI. This way they could definitively solve the international attachment of our country to ESDRA. After the meeting with the vice president, Mr Ramon Carreras, everything went very well, and at the ESDRA Congress of June 2000, Spain entered this international body. The Spanish representative for ESDRA is Mr Carles García.

The help offered by Mr Tim White to many Spanish mushers and his participation in Pirena – he won in 1998 – made the IFSS approach to be the reality of our country. Personally, Mr White was able to see how Pirena was able to meet 50,000 people in a mushing party in Barcelona. Because of all this, the entry of Spain in this international federation was much more direct. In September 2000 Spain finally entered the IFSS. The Spanish representative for the IFSS is Mr Pep Parés.

The 1st IFSS World Junior Championship, held in Spain in December 1999, represented a great dream for many young mushers. Boys and girls from different countries competed on the Pyrennees snow. The youngest Spaniards, with a young dog and their heads at the level of their sleds, ran in this mushing party which for them was called the Friendship Trophy. The Junior Championship made many young people enthusiastic for mushing. Some of them want to go to Fairbanks. From here, with our effort and the cooperation of the IFSS, we will help them to make their dream a reality.

In spite of the climate of our country and the fact that we must find snow on the mountains over 1500m high, mushing is still growing with this magic mixture of nature, sport and respect for dogs.

AFSS AGM

Peter Komidar

You may recall that when the AFSS was first announced, we made it clear that AFSS Steering Committee would put in place the administrative skeleton of the organisation and then call an AGM. Well the time has now come! The inaugural AFSS AGM will be held on Saturday 26 May at a venue to be announced shortly.

This first AGM will undoubtedly be the most important of all AGMs because it will install the first democratically elected committee and that committee will be responsible for taking decisions that will shape the future direction of the organisation.

Does this sound overly melodramatic? Well not really. While a draft constitution is being prepared for consideration by the new Committee, in its deliberations on the form of the final constitution and elsewhere, the Committee will be responsible for determining the following important questions:

- what role should affiliated state bodies and clubs have relative to individual members (refer to Cliff French's article in the Dec/Jan edition of Hike);
- should breed clubs be affiliated with the AFSS
- will existing AFSS initiatives continue - like the AFSS/Hike point score, work towards a trans-Tasman point score, copies of the IFSS gazette made freely available to members, the soon to be launched AFSS Web Site
- will efforts continue to affiliate the AFSS with its international counterpart, the IFSS
- will efforts continue to fulfil the requirements for Federal funding (including membership of the IFSS and the placing of an Australian musher in the top of the field at a world championship event – which Cliff French is currently attempting to do!).

Clearly this AGM will be a watershed in the history of the sport in Australia.

If you have a strong view on where you want the sport to progress in Australia, now is your first and most important opportunity. Now is the time to BECOME A MEMBER OF THE AFSS. This will enable you to vote at the AGM in May. It also entitles you to nominate for a position on the AFSS Committee.

Become a member

Simply fill out the membership form below and send it, along with your membership fee, to AFSS, PO Box 3084, Canberra, ACT, 2601.

Membership is $15 individual and $25 family. Membership is open to all people who participate in the sport of mushing.

Or – write to the AFSS at the above address seeking more information.

Nominate for a postion on the AFSS Committee

Nominations must be received by the AFSS no later than 19 May, 7 days before the date of the AGM. While it is not mandatory, it is requested that nominees answer the questions on the nomination form – as this will assist AFSS members in the casting of their ballots. Information in the nomination forms will be circulated to all AFSS members prior to the AGM.

In accordance with the association's model rules, nominations are open only to AFSS members and MUST include the signature of 2 AFSS members and the consent of the nominee.

Nominations are open for the following positions:

- president
- vice-president
- treasurer
- secretary.

And good luck!

Please note that according to the model rules, if insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies on the committee, the candidates nominated are taken to be elected and further nominations are to be received at the AGM. If insufficient further nominations are received, any vacant positions remaining on the committee are taken to be casual vacancies to which AFSS

Kiwi Racing Sibes Snowy & Scout
Photo: Craig Nicholson

AFSS Membership :

Name: _____
Organisation: _____
Address: _____
_____
_____
Telephone: _____Fax: _____
Email: _____

✂ ----------

AFSS Committee Nomination Form

Nominee's Name: .....

I the above mentioned nominee agree to be a candidate for the position of:

☐ President
☐ Vice President
☐ Treasurer
☐ Secretary

Note: You may nominate for more than one position (ie tick more than one box) – however you will only be eligible to hold one position.

Signature of Candidate.....

Signature of AFSS supporting member 1 .....

Signature of AFSS supporting member 2 .....

Voluntary Questions:
Note: this information is not mandatory. Answers provided by the candidate will be provided to all AFSS members to assist in their deliberations.

1. What are your key policy positions with regard to the future of the AFSS?
2. What skills/experience would you bring to the position
3. What are your priorities for the first 12 months should you be elected to office.

Musher Profile - Eric Donkin

In preparation for the December/ January edition of *Hike!*, we made a call to all overseas racing kennels seeking travelling Australian mushers to visit/work at their kennels. In reponse to this we got an email from Eric Donkin - an Australian expat musher living in the far north of Canada. So of course we asked him to do a musher profile! And here is Part I. Part II will appear in the April edition.

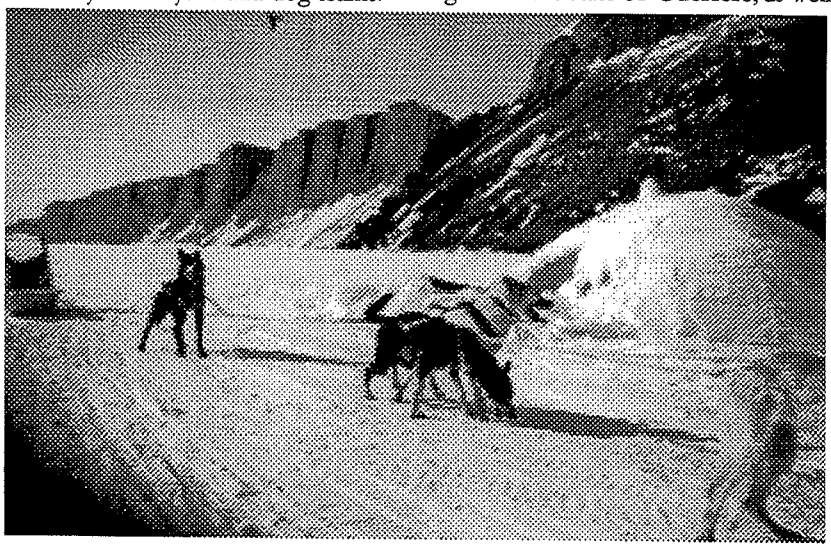
I grew up in the 'burbs about ten miles west of Sydney. When I was a kid we'd sometimes hear on the radio that it had been snowing up on the Blue Mountains, so on Sunday the family would dress up in its warmest clothes and drive up for a look. We'd go as far as Blackheath but never saw any snow. It wasn't until I was 18 when my mate and I drove my old '52 Customline down to Thredbo one winter, did I see it for the first time. I loved the Snowy Mountains and over the following years, my old Ford traded for a Land Rover, I made many trips down there. The Alpine Way, when it was opened, became one of my favorite summer drives. I always took this route whenever I traveled to Melbourne and back. The country between Corryong and Tallangatta was some of the best I've seen anywhere. Barrington Tops was another area I liked. After I finished my apprenticeship I climbed into the Land Rover and went walkabout. I worked here and there; the sugar mills at Innisfail, the Isa mines, stock work on a station north of Boulia, tourism around the Center and the Katherine Gorge at the Top End, highway construction at Timber Creek and VRD to list a few. I returned to Sydney a few years later nursing a broken arm, after trying my hand at horse-breaking on a Station along the Katherine River ... so much for that. I worked in Sydney for three years, saved my money, and then moved to Canada.

I arrived at Vancouver in July 1974 as an immigrant. I bought a BMW motorcycle with a sidecar and set out to explore my adopted country. I spent the remainder of July and August exploring BC, Alberta and Washington State. Early September saw me leaving Edmonton, headed north for Yellowknife. My original plan had been to check out Yellowknife, then head over to Alaska before it started getting too cold. However, it was all just a bit too much for any single summer; Yellowknife was having its first snowfall as I arrived in late September. The new plan was to see if I could land a winter job in YK, but if nothing suitable turned up, to head down to Mexico for the winter. Then one night, as things will happen, around the campfire as the billy boiled, a passing traveler told me that there were Eskimo villages up in the Arctic that I might find of interest. I knew there and then that that's what I wanted to do. After that, everything just kind of fell into place. I went to the Government office in YK and landed a job right off the bat: A Maintenance Supervisor for the Baffin Region. Within a couple of days I was on a 737 heading north — way, way north.

Like most Aussies with a Public School education I knew precious little about the Eskimos, save that they lived way up north in igloos and that they had kayaks and dog teams. So began my "education".

For a start, they call themselves "Inuit" which means "people". The younger generations especially didn't like the name "Eskimo"; the Indians to the south, who were their enemies, had given this name to them. By this time the kayak had given way to 24-foot canoes with 25 to 40hp outboards and people lived for much of the year in small, heated government houses. Igloos (snow houses) were and are still used during winter by hunters and families traveling overland or by the sea ice. The dog teams however, were a lot harder to find as the government's northern policies along with snowmobiles and a different lifestyle had all but wiped them out. My job at the time, took me to most of the Baffin communities and I noted that there may not have been many more than a dozen families keeping teams going in the entire Eastern Arctic.

I continued working for a couple of years but by then I was getting caught up in the local politics and the petty in-fighting that passes for a government employee's "career". So I quit and went to live in Central Mexico. I returned to Arctic Bay during 78/79 to work again and make some money as I was trying to buy an avocado plantation near Iguala in the state of Guerrero, as well



An abandoned Igloo near Arctic Bay ***Photo: E Donkin.***

Some kids hooking up a team of pups to go rabbit and ptamican hunting Photo: Eric Donkin

as setting up a facility for the breeding and production of fighting cocks, (Gallos) which is a very prestigious and popular sport throughout Latin America. Thus, the following three years saw me going back and forth between Arctic Bay and Mexico. However, it all ended. By the late 70's there was quite a lot of nasty stuff going on in Central America and southern Mexico and North American gringos were especially *persona non grata.* Therefore, it was back to Arctic Bay. I'd wanted to have a dog team for some time but it always looked to be a long-term commitment, especially as I'd be starting from scratch and didn't have a clue where to begin. A friend of mine had a pair of German Shepherd crosses that I borrowed. I got someone else to make up a couple of harnesses while I gathered all the necessary ropes along with a small qamotik. (This is the Inuit type of sled. It consists basically of a couple of runners cut from 2x6 inch planks that are lashed together with 2x4 inch crosspieces. For dog sleds they average 8 to 12 feet long and 30 to 36 inches wide). My intention had been to drive the "team' straight from the shore and out into the bay. All that I ended up achieving on that and subsequent days was to provide some hilarious entertainment for the locals, for there's nothing they feel, more ridiculous than a white man trying to be like an Eskimo. But I was possessed of grim-jawed determination at the time and was bound to make those dogs understand that I wanted them to pull that sled from A to B and return. Following several exasperating, fruitless days, I elected to skip A to B and concentrate on the return. So I got a helper and hauled everything by snowmobile about two miles to the mouth of the bay. They got the "going home" idea okay and we set off in great style. My elation was short-lived however when after about half a mile they simply conked out. I tried running with them but they were having a problem even pulling the empty sled. That, needless to say, was the end of that. Someone told me much later that Shepherds, because of the geometry of their hindquarters, were totally unsuitable for sled pulling.

There was absolutely nothing else available around here at the time, so I began reading up on the world's various sled dog breeds. Armed with this very limited information, I purchased a pair of Sibes from a pet shop in Montreal. The idea had been to breed them together, but I was never able to get a successful breeding. Instead, I ended up having to breed them to the Shepherds and even to a Doberman that I had. I added a pair of purebred, registered Malamutes that I had bought from a registered kennel in Ontario. The Mals have a pretty good reputation for being great pullers, but pure breeding for the show ring has ruined many of them. Such was the case with these; they turned out to be useless. The result of all this was hardly earth shattering, but at least I'd been able to produce a team of 8 to 10 dogs that I could travel with in the springtime.

The Northern economy at the time was in poor shape. The Anti Fur and Animal Rights movements had destroyed the sealskin and trapping industries and it was at about this time that the Government introduced the Polar Bear Sport Hunt. The Federal and Territorial Governments strictly control the hunting of polar bears. Each community has a certain quota of polar bears it can take each year; tags are allotted for each bear and Arctic Bay gets 13. These are distributed among the local hunters by a Hunters and Trappers Organization. In order to accommodate the Polar Bear Sport Hunt, the HTO members agreed to set aside a certain number of these tags and sell them as part of a complete package to big game hunters from all around the world. The main stipulation of the hunt was that it has to be done by dog team. The package that the big game hunter purchases includes a guide with a dog team who provides the hunters with caribou skin clothing, and takes him/her out for up to ten days. Needless to say, it is quite expensive and has been said to be the toughest of the entire world's big game hunts. Who knows? They are often pinned down by fierce arctic blizzards that keep them confined within a small snow house (igloo) for three or four days on the average. Some of them have gone berserk in these situations, breaking out of the snow house and running off to disappear in the storm. This has caused no end of trouble and, as they are usually big shots, their families are wont to sick an army of lawyers on us to try and sue us out of existence.

Eric's Musher Profile continues next month.

Hike Forum - Pre-Season Training

Owen Robertson and Joszef Toth independently came up with similar ideas for a Hike Forum.

The basic idea is that each month an issue is chosen and 3 or 4 experienced mushers write a piece on the issue. Hike readers can then see the similarities and differences in approach to these issues (eg training, racing, kennel management etc etc).

In turn it is hoped that readers will also write into hike with their views. In this way Hike will better become the reader's forum it was originally intended to be.

Di Baker

Our answer to - "how do you start up training following the summer break?"

1. Set some racing goals

Before the start of the new year each of us write our racing goals. Eg I want to better my times in each of the marathon races that I compete in 2001. I want to finish all my races with non injured happy dogs or I want to win that race.

2. Set a training plan

We set a training plan for both us and the dogs.

People - We get the calendar out and fill in a training plan for Jess & I . Wayne is the task master/coach. we have been training since the 1st of january 2001. First week walking 5 times a week increasing the distance each time for a couple of weeks. Then we started running for a couple of weeks. Now we are mixing running , scooter training and weights 5 times a week and we are increasing weight & distance. In the next month we will have the rigs out and pushing them up the hills and riding them down. Distances and speed will be increased until we get up to an hour of intense training. We will continue until we start training the dogs and we will keep doing a couple of days for weights and running. Our training simulates the physical exercise we will do in a race.

3. Dogs

This year we built a one acre paddock that we spend an hour at least once a day depending on tempature running & playing chase the ball with our 18 dogs. This keeps them trim and amused. We also take them swimming. Any leader training can be done with a harness and lead during the warmer months.

We have set a dog training plan - which we are hoping to start in March depending, fingers crossed, on the tempature. We have set a trail near home for basic training and depending how the dogs are going we will increase or decrease depending on fitness. Jess and I will be training a 4 & 6 dog team, but one and two dogs can start with a one km steady run and judge the dogs fitness. We have worked backwards from our race dates on a calendar the distances we need to be training for each week up till March to have the dogs ready for each race distance and further. As we don't have the luxury of colder weather for a long time before our first race, so we are strict with our distance increases that we set each week and training very late at night or early morning. During training we do stop and water on the run as the dogs require.

When we first start training we begin with one day on and one day off. 4-6 dog team at about 4kms intially. Depending how the dogs fare we will increase next run further by a 1km. After a few a couple of weeks we start with two days on and two days off. Then after about a month we go to 3 days on and one day off. Two days hard runs ,third day not so hard. For a team once we have been training a month we jump up 3-5km distance every 1-2 weeks.

With training we try to simulate what distance and rest they will have in a race stitaution, and then push a bit further & harder.

When putting a training program together for yourself and the dogs try and set the program similar to what a race would be like that you are going to compete in. If you are in the one dog class and are going to compete in a 5km race with two runs with 24 hour break. You personally should be able to scoot at least 5km without a dog two days in a row. Your dog should have trained at least 5kms two days in a row.

For the B50 run I will train the dogs 30km have a 6 hour break and then run the dogs 30km again. I will do this run at least a couple of times before the Race.

If you find that you or your dog/dogs have gone flat, are injured or tired have a 2 or 3 day rest. You will be surprised how happy they and you will be after a rest. Pushing tried dogs or person does not get anybody anywhere it is a backward step.

Try and train with others for motivation and support.

What we do is not gospel. After a lot of trial and error, this type of training has improved our teams but we are always open to suggestions and trying something else that may give us better preformance.

Anybody that would like some help developing a training plan I am happy to help.

Owen Robertson

3 years ago I was training a 2 dog team who had a fair bit of experience, 2 years ago I was learning how to run a rig and bigger teams, last year I was trying to teach 4 very green puppies (two of them ran straight under the the trailer and hid at their first hit out) this year I hope to add some mid-distance racing to my calendar so I have had some very different circumstances in which to start pre-season training.

Having said all that the one thing I have been consistent in over all 3 years is how the first 3-4 weeks of training starts. I start slow with small teams (3/4 dog teams) and focus a lot on getting the team under control (Ideally I would like to have a heavy rig / ATV for the first few weeks of training but as I don't I carry 40/50 KGs of extra weight). I tend to do up and back runs down local farm laneways and slowly build the distance from 2-3 kilometres up to 7-8 kilometres.

My aims in this period are:
1 Muscle conditioning
2 Reconfirm key behaviours like lining out / stopping / standing when required (for tangles etc)
3 Teamwork
4 Every dog gets a go up front and in various positions.

I really don't have any set formulas for how I increase distance or a fixed training calendar. As a general rule I like to train 4 to 5 times a week once I have started and I increase and vary the distances based on how the dogs seem to be going. My intention is to start training from the start of March as soon as it gets to less than 12 degrees overnight. Generally in previous years by mid March this is most mornings in Ballarat.

After 3/4 weeks I will begin to hit the State Forest Trail systems increasing distances, adding lots of hills and running larger teams. For me this part of training is about as good as it can get, Autumn mornings are usually very cold around my area (0-2 degrees) and at 6:30 in the morning you normally have the entire State Forest to yourself.

Anyway have a good Pre Season everyone and see you all at Southern Cross.

Jozsef Toth

To start up the proper training I go through 2 main steps.

1 DIET: during summer, to avoid overweight dogs, I use a low energy food. So when cooler weather is approaching I begin to gradually change the food to a higher energy output. Since I only use a premium quality commercial dog food, the job is easily done. Just change from Eagle Pack Maintenance to Eagle Pack Power.

Once this is done and weather permits I get to it .....

2 CONDITIONING , which means to dust the dogs off and get them to a basic fitness, to tone those bodies.

As this year I'll be training up to 10 dogs at the time and alone, I use an ATV (4wheel bike). It's a lotsafer if you are working with 4+ dogs, you can stop and get off anytime anywhere also you have absolute control of the dogs speed. Controlling the speed is very important for me at this stage as somebody clever said "Hard work never hurt a dog but speed will" and that is very true as you let an unfit dog "fly" it is very easy to do some muscle damage. That doesn't mean I never let my dogs go as fast as they can or want to but not until the muscles "hardened" and tendons and ligaments "toughened". To achieve that I try to put a lot of miles on them while keeping it FUN for all of us. No point to have a super fit dog team that doesn't like to run. So always vary the distance and as much possible the landscape.

This is the time I brake in young or new dogs, play with the leaders, and start finding the best position on the team for each dog. When the dogs are fit and behave in the team and your leaders got some faint idea which way to go then you say ah... step 3. TRAINING... but that wasn't the question was it?

Ivan Douglas

Firstly I believe pre season training begins the first week of the last race, that is not to allow your team to Veg out. Yes they certainly deserve a rest from the pressures of always being in harness, and of being in a trailer or dog box for hours on end as we travel from race to race. I am now a firm believer of not totally slipping out the norm just because the season has finished.

One of the traps that I fell into in the early days was just the opposite too the above, we stopped exercising regularly, we ate a little more than we should have, we became veggies. If I could give a tip to any newcomers to our sport then that would be DON'T DO WHAT I DID, your dogs MUST be fit all year round.

We now regularly exercise our dogs (all year round) by swimming and free running, as we are lucky enough to have a canine swimming pool and off lead exercise area within ten minutes of where we live, we also use a walking machine for most nights of the week (when it is cool), to exercise the dogs at a fast walking pace, for approximately 20 minutes each.

PRE RACE TRAINING

I guess when you start your pre race training is dependent on where you live and what temperatures you encounter, sometimes we can have an extended summer and not start training until well into April, other times we may be lucky and can start earlier.

This is the time where the Pre season training really pays off because you are not starting from scratch, and your team is less likely to suffer any injuries, especially muscular.

Once the temperatures have started to drop, and this may be very late at night or extra early in the morning, we will have our first run of the season and may only be a kilometer or two, this is where you have to be very careful as your team will be raring to go, they won't care that they haven't done this for almost six months and could do themselves some serious injury, so you must take it easy and apply the brakes.

We would continue these short runs for up to three weeks (based on three runs per week) and gauge the dogs by how they look when running, and how quickly they recover before adding a kilometer or two to the distance.

Every dog and every team is different, some can be ready in a few weeks others will take longer, only the Musher can really see if they are ready to step up to the full distance. Wait until you are sure that they are ready before increasing the distance.

In my opinion your Pre Season training is as important as your Pre Race training.

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SO YOU WANNA BE A MUSHER

Chapter 2: Your First Time

Peter Komidar

So you've decided to try your hand at mushing. What can you expect to happen?

Firstly, it is sensible to take your first run on a scooter not a rig and preferably with one dog rather than two.

And secondly, it is advisable to have an experienced musher on hand. If you don't know any local mushers, contact Hike! (see contact details in the inside front cover) and well put you in touch with someone who can help.

Before you set off with your dog(s) on the trail, a musher will give you a short talk on the basics of mushing. There are 5 basic rules you need to follow on your first run. These are:

1. **Don't** - let the line between the scooter and the dog go loose - it could get caught in the wheel of the scooter or around the your dog's hind leg – and the jerking on the dogs spine as it takes up the slack can also cause injuries. As you can see a loose line can cause damage to you, your dog and your equipment. The way to avoid this is to use your brakes to keep the scooter behind the dog. This is especially important when going down hill. **NEVER scoot beside your dog.**
2. **Do** - help your dog as much as you can. As this is your first run, it will be new and confusing for you and your dog(s). Moreover, both of you are likely to be out of condition. So give your dog a break and scoot along with him - don't just stand on the scooter.
3. **Don't** - expect your dog to perform like a seasoned veteran the first time. Some dogs take to mushing like ducks to water, others take more time. Remember this is likely to be the first time your dog has really pulled something (and gotten away with it!) all your heeling work has probably taught your dog to disregard its pulling tendencies. If your dog needs assistance, a musher can send out her/his team ahead - for your dog(s) to chase. If at first your dog is reluctant to run - don't worry, persistence will pay off - just ask some of the experienced mushers about their first time!
4. **Do** - be prepared for the unexpected. While on the trail you may suddenly encounter pot holes, kangaroos, rabbits, dogs, joggers, cars and even horses. If you do, apply your brakes and remind your dog that you are in charge. Later in your mushing career you might wish to encounter a kangaroo or two - they sure make the dogs run faster!
5. **Don't** make the run traumatic for the dog. Your aim should always be to make the experience enjoyable for the dog. If your dog doesn't like running it won't run. While commands need to be firm, they should be followed by lots of praise when the dog obeys them. And most importantly, when you finish the run give your dog lots of praise. Show that you are having fun and that you were happy with its performance - even if it stuffed up on the trail!

It probably sounds pretty confronting. So much to remember, so much responsibility. But if you're like me the trepidation will soon give way to exhilaration and as you watch you dogs perform your emotions will turn to admiration! I was hooked on mushing from my very first run and the thing that really did it was not so much the fun (of which there is plenty) but watching the sheer joy of my dogs as we took off together down the trail.

Next Month: The Equipment

YOUR DOG'S NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

Submitted by Mick Whitaker

1. I will not play tug-of-war with Dad's underwear when he's on the toilet.
2. The garbage collector is NOT stealing our stuff.
3. I do not need to suddenly stand straight up when I'm lying under the coffee table.
4. I will not roll my toys behind the fridge.
5. I must shake the rainwater out of my fur BEFORE entering the house.
6. I will not eat the cats' food, before, or after, they eat it.
7. I will stop trying to find the few remaining pieces of carpet in the house when I am about to throw up.
8. I will not throw up in the car.
9. I will not roll on dead seagulls, fish, crabs, etc.
10. The litter box is not a cookie jar.
11. I will not wake up Mommy by putting my cold, wet nose up her bottom end.
12 . I will not chew my human's toothbrush and not tell them.
13. I will not chew crayons or pens, especially not the red ones, or my people will think that I am hemorrhaging.
14. When in the car, I will not insist on having the window rolled down when it's raining outside.
15. I will not drop soggy tennis balls in the underwear of someone who is sitting on the toilet.
16. We do not have a doorbell. Therefore, I will not bark each time I hear one on the television.
17. I will not steal my Mom's underwear and dance all over the back yard with them.
18. The sofa is not a face towel. Neither are Mom & Dad's laps.
19. My head does not belong in the refrigerator.
20. I will not bite the officer's hand when he reaches in for Mom's driver's license! and car registration.

Born to Lead?

Michaela Paul

I would like to share a theory, which has been on my mind for a very long time.

Every time I ask about leaders, I get the same answer. "**A Lead dog is born**".

But let's just look at it my stubborn way. You can train a Border Collie quite easily for companionship (the clue word here is TRAIN not born) and naturally, Borders are extremely trainable dogs for what they are bred for.

So why is it then that a Sibe, which has been bred for pulling sleds [who know how many years], cannot be trained as a lead dog – instead it must be born a leader?

I am told maybe one dog out of a litter, [if you are lucky], will be a leader. OK, I do hear what they are saying, but what about the one and two class at the races. Aren't these dogs leaders or it is just pure luck that these dogs pull all the way take the right turns and finish the race. So how can the one and two dog class survive when so few lead dogs are born per litter. To my understanding the dogs up the front are leaders whether they are in a 20 dog team or a one dog team but in the one and two dogs class you have to do with what you've got – and that means you don't have the luxury to pick and chose that one natural born leader.

The other question I have is will these dogs perform up front of a team jerking on the line, will these dogs handle the pressure to keep the team standing still when told so, turn them all in the right direction when told so. For bigger teams, the pressure is bigger than life upon a leader.

Well the Border can handle 100 sheep under pressure when he is well trained correctly, why then can't a Sibe, with proper training in its relevant task be expected to perform ittoo. Why is it impossible to have more then one leader in your litter? Why can't a proper trainer train every dog in the litter to be a leader? Is there something wrong with sled dogs when it comes to training? I see it this way, if a dog can hear his name and come when you call him [through repetition training from early age] what is it that makes him untrainable for a lead dog?

OK there will always be a dog that will never perform at the front of a team, just like there are some Borders that will always have a tendency to bite on a sheep's hock. But being born MR NATURAL with the ability to do your turns and stopping and slowing on command without training? That is impossible for me to accept.

To me a leader is the dog up front that keeps the team moving at the speed which he is capable of running – and that depends on the musher's judgment on what speed the dog is capable of running at (please no more dreaming of 35 km average speed) and which turns only when told to. It keeps the line tight at all times and inspires the other dogs on the team to keep up the work at the speed directed by the musher.

But it only takes one dog in the team to slow the team down – if it is not capable of delivering the speed the musher is asking for.

So if you are laughing now, please bear in mind that this is only a theory.

If you have a litter and keep all the pups, you will know by the 12th month of age which dog is going to be up front. So when the time comes to run the dog and you hook it up next to an existing leader and it works well, yes it is MR NATURAL and if it does not work well then it is put in wheel or elsewhere in the team.

Or maybe the pup is put with an older, slower dog and so it copies what the older dog does and it too is MR NATURAL. And later you try this dog in lead and not surprisingly, it takes a few wrong turns at every race or it ignores commands. And the reply to this is that he is not a natural leader. But isn't that because it was trained not to be leader?

So I ask, why not train the yearling one on one – after he has got some running under his belt?

Maybe I am naïve, maybe I am not. But my theory is LEADERS ARE TRAINED to obey commands. They are not born that way. And a good trainer could have a litter full of leaders if he wanted to train that many – but if you don't lead train your dogs then you better hope for that magic one dog per litter!

Caught in the Net

Two new mushing web pages appeared over the last month – and both were very close to home:

The New Zealand Federation of Sleddog Sports now has a web presence with all sorts of stuff. The site includes among other things, some great photos, results of the NZ pointscore and even a dog point score system! Also, there is a link to Hike! on the links page! Check it out.

Also appearing this month was the web site for the Alaskan Malamute Social Club of Queensland. This site has a page on dog activities which includes sleddog racing, backpacking and weight pull. Some interesting photos are included.

Links to both these pages can be found on the Hike! web site.

The Snake Whacker

Sharon Komidar

Last week we had an unwelcome visitor near the back of our house – a 4 foot long brown snake! Luckily for us, while the dogs were out at the time, they only chased the snake and didn't actually attack it (which is unusual). Also luckily, they stopped their pursuit and came back to me on command (which is also unusual!).

Anyway, I was telling a friend of mine about the incident. He had lived in the bush for many years and was particularly experienced with snakes!

He asked me if I had a snake whacker. This was the first time I heard of this invention.

Apparently, the snake whacker is well know instrument to bushies around Canberra.

Now, Im sure you know that killing snakes is illegal throughout Australia – and for good reason as these animals have just as much right to live here as any other animal. However, when a snake is considered a threat to humans or livestock (including dogs) – for instance when it appears near your house! – then it is entirely legal to kill the snake.

But did you know that the most common implement for killing snakes is the shovel. But its not the best instrument and that is brought out by the statistics. Most snake bites to adults occur when the person is trying to kill the snake. The problem with the shovel method is two-fold (according to my friend). Firstly in order to chop a snake in half you have to be virtually on top of the snake – and well within striking distance. And secondly, a snake does not die instantly when chopped into two. The front end (the end with the fangs) is easily able still to attack and poison its prey (ie you).

This is where bushy technology comes in. The snake whacker consists of a thick piece of dowel (about 3 cm diameter and about as long as a boom stick) with a thick length of heavy chain attached at the end (about 50 cm long). The chain is attached by attaching a 5 cm long piece of metal pipe (the same diameter as the dowel). The pipe fits over the dowel for half its length. Insert a screw through the pipe and dowel at the base of the pipe and another screw just down from the top end of the pipe (where there is no dowel) and through a link of the chain. And hey presto a snake whacker.

So why is a snake whacker any better than a shovel? Firstly the whacker lets you get a big swing. One direct hit and the snake is history! Also the whacker allows you to whack at the bushes or woodpile or where ever the snake may be hiding – whithout placing you within striking distance. Meanwhile, once you have struck the blow you are safely out of striking range. And it doesn't matter where on the snake's body you hit it. The snake whacker will break its back – making it immobile – and therefore no longer dangerous. You can then kill it off humanely and safely.

No one likes killing things. And I for one would not relish having to do the deed. But if I, or my dogs, are in danger, I will do so without a moment's hesitation. And I have a certain degree of comfort knowing that hanging just near the back door is the state-of-the-art technology in snake dispatching.

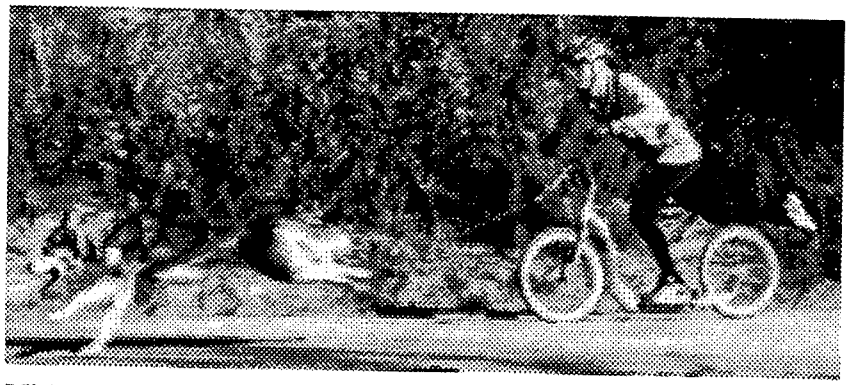
Jamie Dalziel gets serious air at the 2000 Wilddog Derby Photo: Sharon Komidar

Terry Hinesly hangs up the harnesses

US musher and oft time Australian race marshal, has advised that he is hanging up the harnesses for the last time.

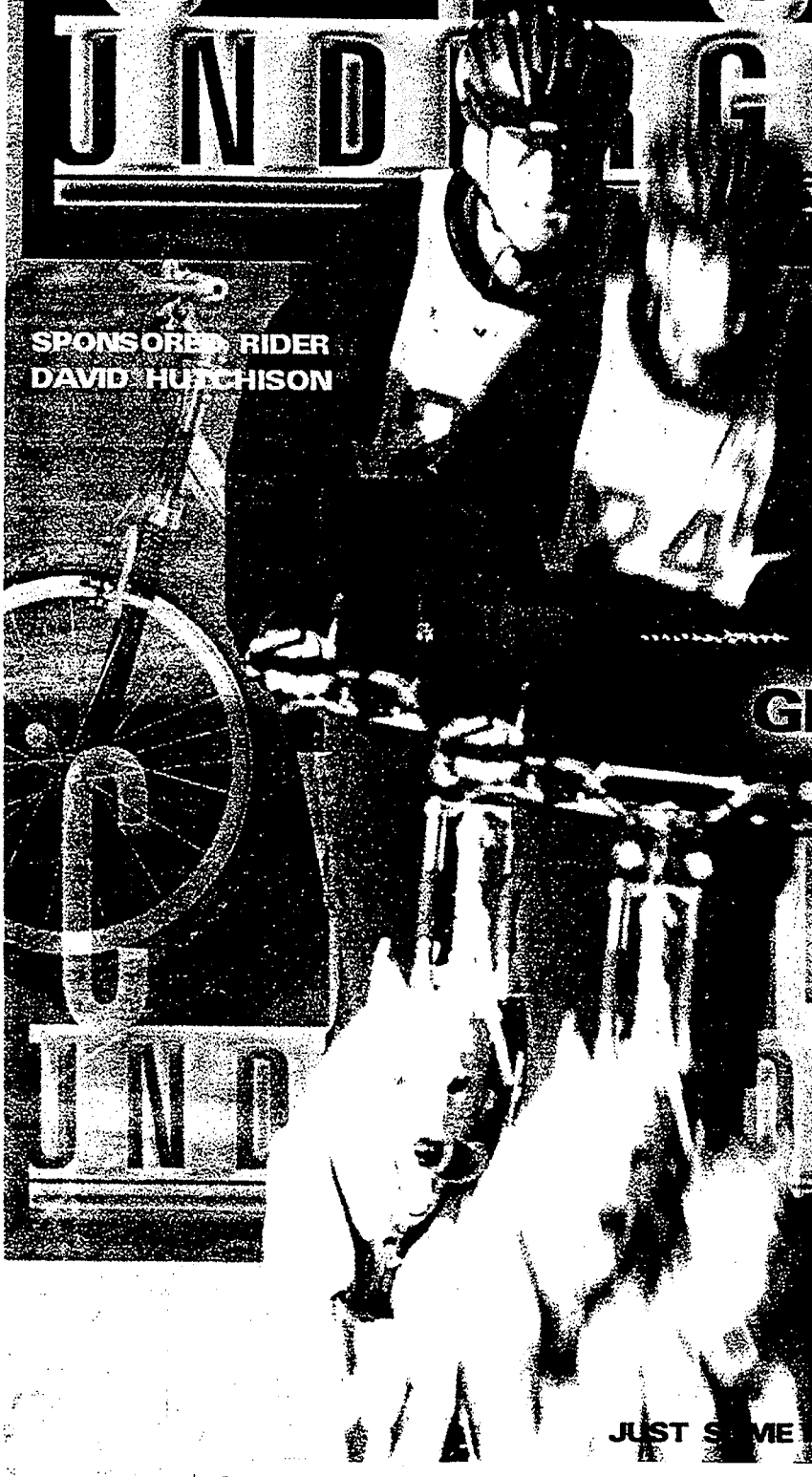
Due to a number of circumstances, Terry has decided to call it a day. Terry and Cari are currently on their way to watch the Iditarod. But on their return, Terry has promised to write and article for Hike!

Terry's article will appear in the April edition.



Michael Herbst Photo: Dave Hodgson

CYCLE UNDERGROUND



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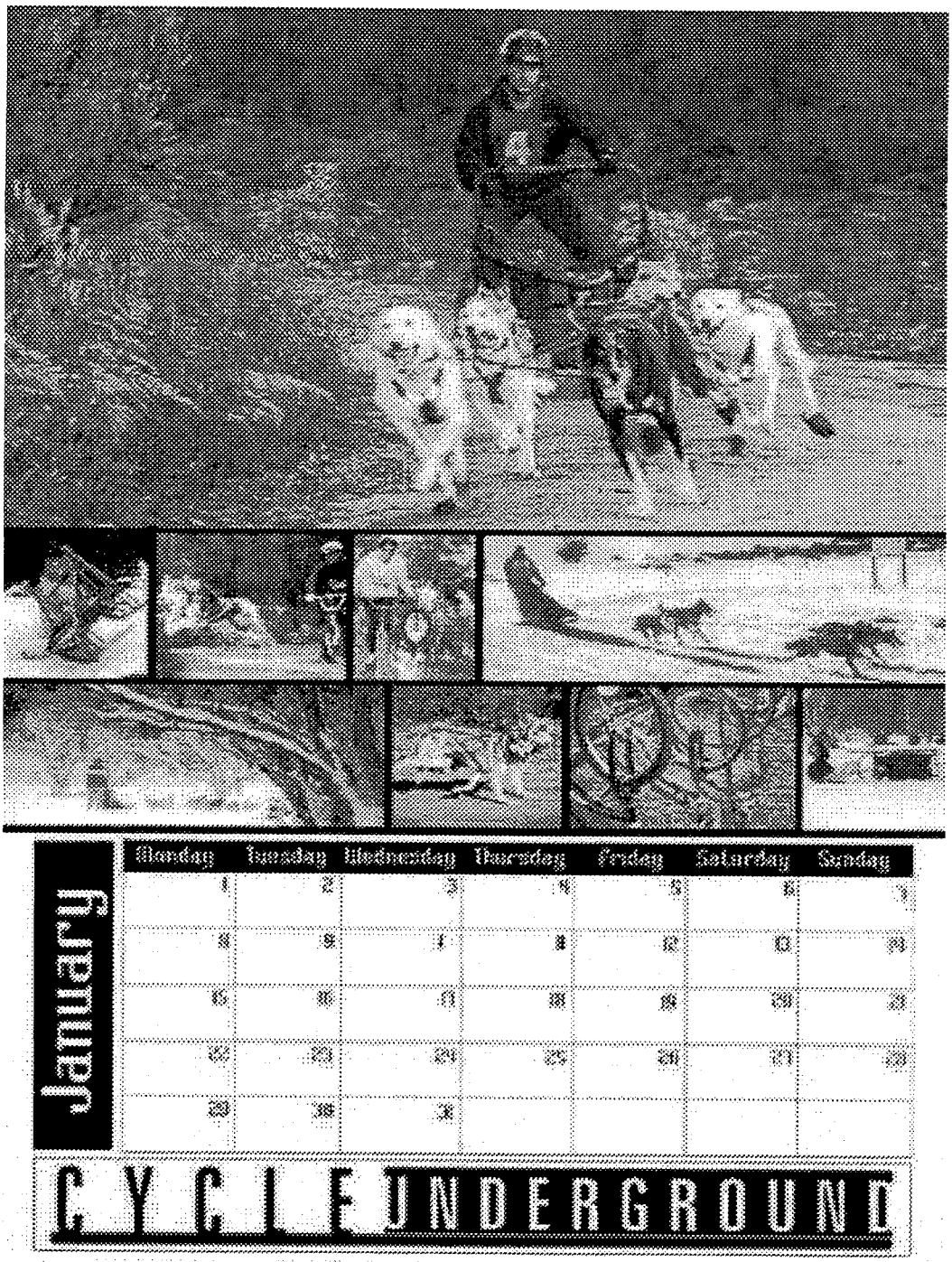

2001 Sled Dog Racing Calendar

This full colour A3 size 12 month calendar captures action shots from all Australian national circuit races. Order your calendar for Aud $20 + postage (available for sale to international as well as Australian readers)

To view the calendar in living colour – check it out at the *Hike!* web site. Follow the links at http://members.dynamite.com.au/komidar/Index.html

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ANNOUNCING THE GOLDSEEKERS SLED DOG RACE

Jacqui McNicol

Most people are aware that CHA closed down in July last year leaving Victoria with one less race to attend. This race weekend is now being filled by a new club starting up and using the same race dates. The new club will be known as the Goldseekers Sled Dog Club Inc. Goldseekers Sled Dog Club Inc in no way resembles or proposes to resembe the Canine Harness Association Inc. We are an entirely new club providing 'sledding' sport to those who are interested. The club was started after CHA closed down so that we would all have the opportunity to keep working and racing our dogs in harness either competitively or just for fun. Victoria cannot afford to lose any race weekends or clubs. We must keep the sport alive, as not only does it provide fun, exercise, weekends away etc for all of us, our families and dogs, but it shows other people with working dogs that are locked up in little yards, that there are good times to be had for the whole family and that they can exercise their pets, have a break away and have fun all at the same time.

Goldseekers Sled Dog Race will be held on the second weekend of July which was the old CHA weekend. We will use the same race site as last year which is situated between Wedderburn and Inglewood at Glenalbyn (Kooyoora). Maps will be included with race packs.

The tracks will remain basically the same distances except one dog, which will be 3km.

There will also be a junior race this year for those children who are in between the peewee and adult classes.

The classes will consist of 1 dog, 2 dog, 3 &4 dog, 6 dog, peewees and juniors.

Many ideas are being put forward in regard to race meet ideas and entertainment. If anyone has any ideas they can forward them to me via email to mcnicol@ruralnet.net.au We will look at all letters and considerations. We can't however accept any criticisms from anyone in regard to how other clubs do things. Each club is individual and as such has their own way of doing things but we will all only survive with your help. We won't promise to be the best or biggest but we will provide you all a good weekend.

We are looking for people to become members of our club. If you would like to become a member of Goldseekers Sled Dog Club and help out, we will be offering: newsletters and health care tips and tips on dog behaviour, discounts on race entries and more. If you are interested in membership, inquiries can be forwarded to me at the abover email address, by phone or snail mail. Membership by invitation.

We have now received sponsorship from various companies. Our major sponsor, NATURE'S GIFT will be providing prizes down to 10th place in all classes. Everybody who enters will be receiving samples and gifts. We are designing special prizes for the younger entrants (peewees and juniors).

We already have a lot of positive feedback from many people. Thank you and we look forward to you all coming to our first race.

Jacqui McNicol
Goldseekers Sled Dog Club Inc
PO Box 42
WEDDEERBURN VIC 3518

Humour on the Trail

S Randal

Submitted by the Baker Family

Well. I've heard of 'chumming the trail' but this was different. It has been known to happen; the driver out front just 'happens' to drop some fish bits or something, and the following teams are severely distracted.

So, I was running along in second place on the trail at Diamond Lake. My lead dog snatched up something from the trail. I hollered at her, and she dropped it, but my 'teenager' in the middle of the team got it. I know from experience that he will try to consume booties, gloves, etc., so I hooked down. When I got there to relieve him of the item, it was a pair of women's panties! In my surprise I just flung them off the trail. If I had been willing to collect them, maybe there would have been more believers back at the parking lot! I've tried to come up with a feasible source of these panties, but it is hard to imagine....

❖❖❖

Below: Cgoo.
Photo: The Baker Family

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Race Updates

Southern Cross chages date

The race will be held on the 26-27th May at Gumbuya Park. Rumour has it that race organisers are considering a 6-dog class but this has not been confirmed.

Race distances are the same as last year. And the the Sports and Pro classes will be retained as in previous years.

Sydney Sprint Minus the 3 Dog Class but Plus a Distance Race

Race distances at the Sydney Sprint race will be shorter than last year. Distances have yet to be confirmed but Hike! will keep you updated as information comes to hand.

Also the 3 dog class will be omitted this year.

The Siberian Express Team are also putting on a mid-distance night heat for 4 -6 dog teams. Stay tuned for more information.

South Australian Sleddog Sports Association gets closer

As notified in last month's Hike, a special meeting was held to guage interest in forming a state body for mushing in South Australia.

Februray saw the formation of the Steering Group to develop the South Australian Sleddog Sports Association.

For further information contact Michael Herbst at email: arcticstarr@chariot.net.au or mail 88 Bethesda Road, Lewiston, SA 5501.

The Steering Group is aiming to hold the AGM at the end of the 2001 race season.

Rumours of a Qld State Body

There are also rumours that a Qld body may soon be announced. Stay tuned!

Tumbarumba Race?

Catherine Cheney from Tumbarumba near Tumut in NSW is considering holding a sprint race.

The race site is at a forestry camp near blowering dam in the foothills of the snowy mountains.

If you can assist Catherine please call on 0269483893

More updates on this one next month!

Southern Highlands Freight Run adds some weight!

Although unconfirmed at this stage, Hike! has it on good authority that the SHRF will be adopting freight race rules based on advice from USA race organisers.

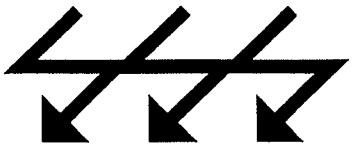
The rumour is that the mandatory weight to be carried by each team will be increased while the distance will be decreased. The aim being to gradually increase the distances over time as the Australian mushing public get used to the idea.

We should have more details next month!

Steve Carrick Qualifies for Iditarod

In order to be eligible to race in the Iditarod, competitors must have finished in qualifying distance races. Steve Carrick finished 15th in the 200 mile Tustumena 200 Race in Kasilof Alaska on 3 February. The winner of the race was Jeff King.

Next month Hike will feature the Iditarod results.



IFSS to have live audio streaming of world championship races on the internet

Thanks to cooperative effort with KIAK AM, the station that broadcasts the races locally, KSUA, the student radio station at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the UAF Linux Users Group, we do plan on streaming the IFSS events and the ADMA Open North American Championship. Maybe the Limited, too. KIAK will be doing just spot reports from the Nordic and early IFSS events, but Pete Van Nort and Lynn Orbison, their mushing announcers, have said they're willing to extend coverage for Internet listeners.

There will be a link at the top of the http://www.sleddog.org/ifss web page. Want to try it now? Go to the direct site at: http://ksua.uaf.edu/dog_musher.html Note in that address there isn't a www, and there is an underscore after dog.

If when you click on one of the two links, and after a few seconds you hear rock and roll or some other student station programming, no need to read further! When the races are on, the student station will be replaced with the race coverage.

If the link didn't work, read on.... To listen to the live stream, you will need: Real Audio Player Version 8 Microsoft Media Player Version 7 WinAmp version 2.72 Unfortunately, Windows 98se and Windows 2000 come with Media Player version 6, and many people have Real Audio version 7. Those work fine for archived audio, but not this type of stream. The free installer for each of those are over 6 megabytes to download.

Fortunately, WinAmp works just fine, and is only a 500 kilobyte download. That should take less than five minutes with a dial up connection.

You can get WinAmp from http://www.winamp.com, or download the lite version directly from the http://ksua.uaf.edu/dog_musher.html site.

Experts say cats may damage brains

Julian Brouwer
The Scotsman

US Scientists have found evidence that cats really do drive people mad.

Researchers from Baltimore's Johns Hopkins University say their findings show keeping a furry pet can lead to schizophrenia, manic depression and even permanent brain damage.

Dr Robert Yolken and his colleague, Dr Fuller Torrey, who have conducted years of tests, believe a parasite found in cat faeces called toxoplasma gondii infects the human brain.

Worryingly, pregnant women who contract the parasite, can transmit it to the foetus, with devastating effects on brain development.

Cats pick up the parasite from eating infected rats or mice but do not themselves suffer ill effects. In the rodents themselves, the parasite produces brain lesions and a host of rather odd behaviours. Dr Torrey and Dr Yolken reveal the parasite can enter the foetal brain, lie dormant for 15 to 30 years, then activate and induce schizophrenia.

The pair began to suspect a link between schizophrenia and the cat-borne infection because people with the disease are more likely to have been born in late winter or early spring and cats stay inside and use their litter boxes more in winter. They found in one test that children who went on to develop schizophrenia were more likely to come from homes with cats.

They point to the fact that schizophrenia and other similar illnesses were rare in Europe until the late 19th century, when cats became popular as pets.

Schizophrenia expert Dr Mary Seeman, a University of Toronto psychiatry professor, says the pair's ideas are "just as plausible as any other theory of schizophrenia, since the causes are completely unknown, other than that genes are involved.

"These days, infections have been shown to be associated with peptic ulcers and heart attacks, so why not schizophrenia?"

Pathologists at the Stanley Foundation Brain Bank in Bethesda are now searching for signs of toxoplasma gondii infection in the brains of people who suffered schizophrenia or severe depression. They are about to begin clinical trials in which schizophrenics will be given drugs normally used to treat the infection.

Despite his theories, Dr Torrey did add a note of hope for animal lovers, saying: "Don't get rid of your cats yet. We haven't proven anything yet."

Cliff French Scores a Second!

MICHIGAN 16 FEBRUARY In a major boost to his campaign to place well at the world championships – thereby making history for Australia and at the same time jumping a major necessary hurdle for AFSS to secure access to Federal funding – Cliff French has come second at the Midnight Run!

The Midnight Run is a 63 mile 6 dog mid-distance night race in Michigan USA.

Cliff was running dogs from Tim White's kennel. Tim is currently the IFSS Vice President. Tim came in third, closely followed by Peter Dobbs of New Zealand in 4th place. Peter who runs a German Wirehair Pointer team in New Zealand was also racing dogs from Tim White's kennel.

Both Cliff and Peter in their acceptance speeches thanked Tim for giving them pick of the dogs for their teams!

The race was not limited to Americans and our intrepid adventurers, mushers from Belgium, Russia, Canada, and Poland also attended.

Congratulations Cliff – and good luck with the rest of your campaign!

HOUSEBREAKING TIP

Unknown Obedience Trainer
Submitted by Beth Bobroff

The best piece of advice I have ever given any puppy owner is to get a newspaper, roll it up very tight, secure it with a rubber band and leave it on the coffee table.

Then when the puppy piddles in the house, chews up a slipper, or does anything it is not supposed to do, simply take the newspaper and bang it on the top of your head very hard while repeating.....

"I should have been watching my puppy"
"I should have been watching my puppy"
"I should have been watching my puppy".

Whispers

Newest goss is that the Coutts have added a new family member to the team. "Timmy" has come to the family after being abandoned by his original family. He will be helping them out around the farm and he is now an integral family member in the caring for and the training and management of the dogs.

Donald Maillet at Canberra 2K
Photo: Tam Hutchison

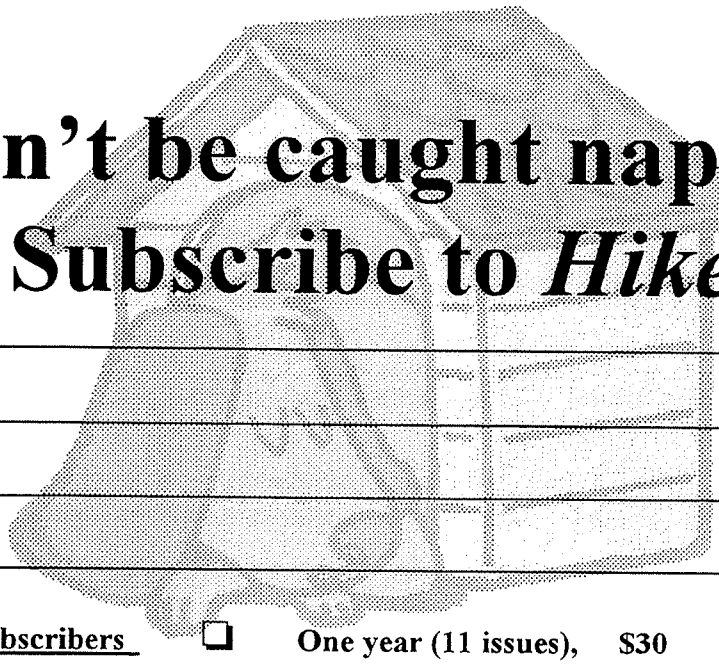
2001 Race Calendar

Sprint Races

Race	Distances	Date	Contact
Southern Cross Pro Am (Victoria)	1 Dog Class – 2 heats of 3km 2 Dog Class – 2 heats of 4.8km 4 Dog Class – 2 heats of 6.8km	26-27 May	Karen Johnson kazjohn@netspace.net.au (03) 9853 0193
Undera Sled Dog Dash (Victoria)	1 Dog Class 3 heats of 2km 2 Dog Class, 3 heats 4.5km 3&4 Dog Class 2 heats 7km + night heat 4.5km, Novice 2 heats of 2 km -no night heat	9-11 June	Helen & David Pettifer pettifer@bigpond.com
Sydney Sled Dog Sprint (New South Wales)	1 Dog Class 2 heats of TBA 2 Dog Class 2 heats of TBA 4 Dog Class 2 heats of TBA 6 Dog Class 2 heats of TBA	23-24 June	Craig Turner ionamal@shoal.net.au (02) 4285 2457
Northern Exposure Classic (Queensland)	1 Dog Class 3 heats of 2.5 km 2 Dog Class 3 heats of 4 km 4 Dog Class 3 heats of 6 km	29/6 - 1/7	Donald Maillet d.maillet@mailbox.uq.edu.au (07) 3822 6427
Gold Seekers Race (Victoria)	1 Dog Class 2 heats of 3 km 2 Dog Class 2 heats of 6.5 km 4 Dog Class 2 heats of 9.0 km 6 Dog Class 2 heats of 12.7 km	7-8 July	Jacqui McNicol mcnicol@ruralnet.net.au
Wild Dog Derby (South Australia)	1 Dog Class 2 heats of 3.6 km 2 Dog Class 2 heats of 5.9 km 4 Dog Class 2 heats of 7.6 km	14-15 July	Michael Herbst arcticstarr@chariot.net.au
Sydney Sled Dog Shield (New South Wales) TO BE CONFIRMED	1 Dog Class 2 heats of 3.6 km 2 Dog Class 2 heats of 4.6 km 3 & 4 Dog Class 2 heats of 8.2 km	28-29 July	Ivan Douglas skylaska@zip.com.au (02) 9824 7759
The Burn (Victoria)	1&2 Dog Class 2 heats of 7.5km 3, 4 & 6 Dog Class 2 heats of 15km Junior Class 2 heats of 3.8km	4-5 August	Lisa Hodgson lihuk@netspace.net.au (03) 5281 5283
A5000 Sled Dog Derby (Victoria) TO BE CONFIRMED	TBA	11-12 August	Robert Stevens sleddogs@ssc.net.au (03) 5428 3285
Canberra Classic (ACT) TO BE CONFIRMED	1 Dog Class 2 heats of 3.6 km 2 & 3 Dog Class 2 heats of 7.2 km 4 Dog Class 2 heats of 9.0 km	18-19 August	Len Tomlinson Kivawolf@bigpond.com (02) 6258 8063

Distance Races

Race	Distance	Date	Contact
SX Distance Race	6 Dog Class (min 4 dogs) Distance TBA	23-24 June	Craig Turner ionamal@shoal.net.au (02) 4285 2457
Southern Highlands Freight Run (New South Wales)	1 Dog Class 2 heats of 7.8 km 2 Dog Class 2 heats of 14.9 km 4 Dog Class 2 heats of 20.8 km 6 Dog Class 2 heats of 20.8 km	7-8 July	Becky Walters bknown@ozemail.com.au
B60 (New South Wales)	6 Dog Class 2 stages of 30km (min 4 dogs)	21-22 July	Stephen Carrick crack@ozemail.com.au
Kooyoora Challenge (Victoria)	2 heats of 25 km 6, 8, Open class (min 4 dogs)	4-5 August	Barry Burden frostbyt@acepia.net.au
CSDC Distance Race (ACT) TO BE CONFIRMED	2 stages of 15.5km (min 4 dogs)	18-19 August	Andrew Gersbach andrew@dataflex.com.au 0414 690 204



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