

# The Pennsylvania Sled Dog Club, Inc.



## PRESS RELEASE

### Ten Tips On How To Enjoy Your First Sled Dog Race

If you've never attended an organized sled dog race, the first moments might seem like a raucous canine carnival with bundled-up men and women dashing endlessly between rows of pick-up trucks and dog sleds parked in the snow.

After the uproarious barking, however, comes serenity and the whoosh of sled runners in the snow. A short distance from the explosive frenzy at the starting gate is the wintry beauty of woods and fields. And beneath all the noise, color and spectacle of perhaps as many as 1,000 howling huskies lays the most powerful draw - THE warm bond between human and dog.

Modern sled dog sprint racing is a closed course event on a trail packed by snowmobile. Each team is timed by a stopwatch or electric timer. In races of more than one heat, the total elapsed time is used to determine the winner. Individual teams of four, six, eight, or unlimited number dog team classes leave the starting line at one or two minute intervals.

A little bit of planning by the newcomer can make their first sled dog race a fun and memorable experience.

1. Pick a team and root for it ! Walk around the race course site and look for dogs whose personality and appearance attracts you. Find out who the favored teams are for the different class events and see what championship racing dogs look like. Stick with your team ! Remember, even if your team comes in seventh, there will be others coming in eighth, ninth, and tenth.
2. Talk to the dog team drivers. What other sporting event can you attend and talk to the stars ? In many cases, sled dog racing is a family affair where everyone get involved caring for the dogs. **Ask permission before petting any dog.** Ask the drivers how they pick their team members.
3. Ask drivers about the strategy they and their competitors employ. Fast dogs alone don't guarantee who will win. Like any competitive sport there are many ways to capture a lead, and keep it.
4. Bring your video and photography gear. Sled dog racing is non-stop beauty and excitement set in picturesque environments. Colorful dogs, outfits and people abound.

## Ten Tips Cont'd.

5. Find a vantage point to watch the races several miles into the course. Many races have maps guiding spectators to check points where one can safely see teams race by in the serenity away from the starting gate. Select a point far enough away so you can get to it by car, cross country skis, or snowmobile immediately after "your team" leaves the chute. Cheer them on as they pass by !
6. Be aware of "interval" times . Drivers race against a clock so the comparative distance it takes for a team to get from point A to point B can give you a sense of which team is leading and where "your team" fits in the pack.
7. **Dress very warmly and take extra precautions to keep your feet warm and dry.** Unlike well-tended sled dogs, humans have to worry about cold toes.
8. Talk to drivers and their families about how they care for and feed their dogs. Sled dogs are treasured, canine athletes who receive the best in veterinary care, training and nutrition. Most drivers feed complete and balanced meat-based dog foods to provide the high quality protein needed to counter the stress of racing at 20 mph.
9. **Don't bring pets.** If you do, leave them in a well-ventilated car. Races have been lost because of pets bolting onto the race course.
10. Cooperate with race officials in staying clear of the trail. Stand well back since anyone too close may distract the dogs and cause them to bolt or balk. It's easier and safer for everyone if there is a clear view of the teams on the course.

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