

Mushing Vocabulary

ATV: All terrain vehicle used for travel or trail breaking.

Bibs: Garment worn at the start and finish of the race to identify each musher by the starting order.

Big Su: Refers to the Big Susitna River.

Boonies: A non-rural or urban area, generally an area where no one lives.

Booties: A type of sock that is made to protect the dog's feet from small cuts and sores. These are made out of various materials and the newest materials are designed for comfort and to be more long lasting.

Burled Arch: The finish line in Nome is marked by this arch.

Bush: Remote areas of the interior of Alaska.

By-Pass Mail: Service provided by US Mail System for remote villages to get mail and goods delivered. By-Pass Mail has been used to ship everything from toilet paper to refrigerators.

Checkpoint: Identified places along the race trail designated as official stops for mushers to sign in, have dogs examined by veterinarians, and collect supplies.

Come Gee! Come Haw! Voice commands for 180 degree turns in either direction.

Dog in Basket: Tired or injured dog carried in the sled

Double Lead: Two dogs who lead the team side by side.

Dropped Dog: A dog that dropped from his team at a checkpoint is considered to be a dropped dog. The dog is cared for at the checkpoint by the veterinarian team until it is flown back to Anchorage to the musher's handlers.

Dropped Bags: Supply bags sent to checkpoints, some contain musher supplies such as extra clothing or batteries. Some contain supplies for the dogs, such as food, dog booties, or essential equipment.

Gee: Voice command for right turn.

Haw: Voice command for left turn.

Heet: Alcohol based fuel used by mushers in their cook stoves on the trail.

Husky: Any northern type dog.

Iditarod Air Force (IAF) The team of volunteer pilots that fly supplies before, during, and after the race. They transport necessary goods and supplies, people, and dogs.

Last Frontier: Alaska's State motto. Alaska was the last frontier in the United States

Lead Dog or Leader: Dog who runs in front of others dogs.

Line Out! Command to lead dog to pull the team out straight from the sled.

Malamute: Term often used by old timers for any sled dog. Larger husky

Mush! Hike! All Right! Let's Go! Commands to start the team (Mush is rarely used in the mushing world.)

Neck Line: Line that connects dog's collar to tow line and between the two collars of a double lead.

On by: Command signaling team to keep moving forward and not be distracted by whatever the team is going by at the time.

Outside: Any place in the lower 48 states.

Overflow: When the ice gets so thick that the water has nowhere to go, it pushes up and over the ice. This overflow often gets a thin layer of ice when the temperature drops making it dangerous to cross.

Pacing: Leading a team with some sort of motorized vehicle that can set the 'pace' at a specific speed.

Pedaling: Pushing the sled with one foot while the other remains on the runner

Red Lantern: The musher who is running in last place. The Red Lantern award is given to the last musher to reach Nome.

Rigging: A collection of lines to which dogs are attached. Includes tow line, tug lines and neck lines

Rookie: A musher who is running the race for the first time or who has never completed the race.

Runners: The two bottom pieces of the sled which come in contact with the snow. They extend back of the basket for the driver to stand on. Runner bottoms are usually wood, covered with plastic or Teflon. This plastic or Teflon is usually replaced at least once during the race.

Siberian Husky: Medium sized (average 50 pounds) northern breed of dog, recognized by the American Kennel Club. Siberians usually have blue eyes.

Slats: Thin strips of wood which make up the bottom of a wooden sled basket. Note: Toboggan sleds have a sheet of plastic as the bottom for their basket

Snow Hook or Ice Hook: Heavy piece of metal attached to sled by line. The snow hook is embedded in the snow in order to hold the team and sled for a short period of time.

Snowmachine: Another name for a snowmobile.

Snub Line: Rope attached to the sled which is used to tie the sled to a tree or other object.

Stake: Metal or wooden post driven into the ground to which dog is tied

Straight: The voice command given to a dog team to signal the team continue straight and not turn on a different trail.

Swing Dog or Dogs: Dog that runs directly behind the leader. Further identified as right or left swing depending on which side of the tow line he is positioned on. His job is to help "swing" the team in the turns or curves.

Team Dog: Any dog other than those described above.

Tether Line: A long chain with shorter pieces of chain extending from it. Used to stake out a team when stakes aren't available.

Toggles: Small pieces of ivory or wood used by Eskimos to fasten tug lines to harnesses

Trail! A request for right-of-way on the trail.

Trail Breakers: The team of volunteers that are on snowmachines (snowmobiles) that stay in front of the race to break trail and put trail markers out for the mushers.

Trail Sweeps: The team of volunteers that are on snowmachine (snowmobiles) that are at the end of the race keeping track of the trail and mushers.

Tug Line: Line that connects dog's harness to the tow line.

Wheel Dogs or Wheelers: Dogs placed directly in front of the sled. Their job is to pull the sled out and around corners or trees.

Whoa! Command used to halt the team, accompanied by heavy pressure on the brake.

*Resource: Iditarod website