

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Gunnar Johnson withdrawn from Iditarod 49 due to positive COVID-19 test

Anchorage, Alaska – Veteran Iditarod musher Gunnar Johnson (bib #11), of Duluth, Minnesota, has been withdrawn from the 2021 Iditarod race at approximately 3:15 p.m. today due to a positive COVID-19 test at the McGrath checkpoint.

Iditarod Race Marshal Mark Nordman, in consultation with epidemiologist Dr. Jodie Guest, made the decision to withdraw Johnson, who is asymptomatic, based on the protocols established in the [COVID-19 mitigation plan](#). Under this guidance and per the Iditarod race rules, Johnson understands that he has been withdrawn. He is incredibly disappointed and felt his dog team looked great.

Per the mitigation plan, Johnson:

- Was immediately notified by COVID-19 Team personnel of the positive results;
- Was immediately removed from the checkpoint area by COVID-19 Team personnel to isolate away from others in an Arctic oven tent; and
- Will be removed off the trail using safe transport.

Per the COVID-19 mitigation protocols, all mushers are tested for COVID-19 just outside the McGrath checkpoint using a rapid antigen test. Johnson was tested by a COVID-19 Team member and the rapid antigen test came back positive. Johnson was then re-tested twice using a molecular-based COVID-19 test and both results came back positive.

Johnson did not come into close contact with race personnel or community members, nor did he enter any buildings or community spaces in McGrath. However, he did park his team as he was planning to rest at the checkpoint.

The COVID-19 Team is in the process of contact tracing and performing additional mitigation measures as needed. The State of Alaska has been notified of the results.

Johnson had 14 dogs in harness at the time of the withdrawal.

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