



Draft

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Dr. Stu Nelson Named as the Iditarod Honorary Musher for the 2025 Race

Wasilla, Alaska – The Iditarod Trail Committee’s (ITC) Board of Directors is proud to announce Dr. Stuart Nelson as the Honorary Musher for the 53rd Running of The Last Great Race®. Dr. Stuart Nelson sadly passed away in September 2024. Nelson’s long standing dedication to the Iditarod, which spanned 38 years, has left an indelible mark on the event. Having started as a trail veterinarian, he became the Chief Veterinarian in 1995, a role he held for decades thanks to his expertise, calm demeanor, and unwavering commitment to the health and safety of the sled dogs.

Throughout his tenure, Dr. Nelson’s mission was clear: to develop protocols and programs that would ensure the well-being of the athletes—both canine and human. Originally focused on racehorses early in his career, Dr. Nelson shifted his attention to sled dogs after his experiences as an Iditarod trail veterinarian. His work in canine athletic health has contributed significantly to our understanding of the cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, gastrointestinal, and nutritional needs of sled dogs, with the benefits extending beyond the race to improve the health of pets worldwide.

Dr. Nelson also distinguished himself as a dedicated educator. He offered invaluable guidance to fellow veterinarians and mushers alike, but his efforts to share knowledge went beyond the race. He communicated with the broader public, including race fans, educators, and the general community, presenting complex topics in a way that was accessible to all. Through articles published in professional journals, the Iditarod Race Guide, and the Dog Care section of the Iditarod website, he educated and inspired countless individuals. Mushers, in particular, have always appreciated Dr. Nelson’s readiness to lend his expertise and answer questions year-round.

“Stu’s warm presence, integrity and unwavering commitment to exemplary dog care has left an indelible mark on all who had the privilege of working with him. He was a remarkable and intrepid man and his legacy will live on through the many he inspired and his impact will never be forgotten. His contributions to the Iditarod were only topped by his months-long solo adventures to parts of the Arctic rarely seen by others,” said Iditarod CEO, Rob Urbach.

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When asked in an interview by long-time Iditarod Photographer Jeff Schultz, “what do you know for sure?” Stu’s response was, “Well, I know that we all die; that our Creator has given us the opportunity to be here; that we must be the best stewards of our animal athletes that we can possibly be.”

The Iditarod Trail Committee is proud to honor Dr. Stu as the 2025 Iditarod Honorary Musher, and will ensure that his legacy lives on within the sport of mushing and within the health and care of the canine athletes of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

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About the Iditarod

The Iditarod Trail Committee is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve the rich tradition of the Alaska sled dog and the Iditarod Trail. The organization is charged with coordinating the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, an annual long-distance sled dog race stretching from Anchorage to Nome for an approximate 1,000-mile journey through Alaska over the roughest, most breathtaking terrain in the world. For more information, visit www.iditarod.com.

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