



DITAROD TRAIL INTERNATIONAL SLED DOG RACE™

OFFICIAL RULES 2026

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OFFICIAL 2026 RULES

Policy Preamble --The Iditarod Trail International Sled Dog Race shall be a race for dog mushers meeting the entry qualifications as set forth by the Board of Directors of the Iditarod Trail Committee. Recognizing the aptitude and experience necessary and the varying degrees of monetary support and residence locations of mushers, with due regard to the safety of mushers, the humane care and treatment of dogs and the orderly conduct of the race, the Trail Committee shall encourage and maintain the philosophy that the race be constructed to permit as many qualified mushers as possible who wish to enter and contest the Race to do so. The object of the race is to determine which musher and dogs can cover the race in the shortest time under their own power and without aid of others. That is determined by the nose of the first dog to cross the finish line. To that end, the Iditarod Trail Committee has established these rules and policies to govern the race.

Policy Intent—The intent of these rules is to ensure fair competition and the humane care of

sled dogs. The race should be won or lost by the musher and dogs on merit rather than technicalities. Race officials appointed by the ITC are responsible for interpreting and enforcing the rules in keeping with that intent.

Pre-Race Procedures and Administrative Rules

Rule 1 -- Musher Qualifications:

A musher is qualified to submit an entry to the Iditarod if:

- Any Iditarod or Yukon Quest Veteran with three or more consecutive scratches or withdrawals must re-qualify to the same standards as a rookie before entry will be accepted. This shall include completion of required finish standards in approved qualifier races within the past three years and a new musher reference. The musher may only use one Iditarod or Yukon Quest attempt counting as a qualifier race”
- he/she is 18 years of age as of the starting date of the Race;
- he/she has completed a prior Iditarod Race; or
- he/she has completed the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race prior to signing up for the Iditarod Race, or;
- he/she has completed two (2) qualifiers with the intent of running another approved qualifier for a total of 750 miles completed by food drop. If the total required miles is not completed by the food drop date, the entry fee will not be refunded.
Total qualifiers completed must include at least two (2) 300-mile races.
- The completion requirements are that a musher must finish either within the top 75% of the field or in an elapsed time of no more than twice the time of the winner; and
- he/she during such approved qualifying races demonstrated the necessary physical and mental aptitude and preparedness, as well as the necessary wilderness and mushing skills.
- If a rookie musher completed the Iditarod as far as the Yukon River within the top 75% of the field or in an elapsed time of no more than twice the elapsed time of the lead musher at the time, he/she will be considered to have completed a 300-mile qualifier.
- Only mushers starting the Iditarod for the first time are eligible for the Rookie of the Year award.
- Mushers must exemplify the spirit and principles of the Iditarod Trail Committee as set forth in the rules, policies, bylaws and mission statement.

Proof of Qualification:

- Except for a prior Iditarod, it is the musher’s responsibility to provide written proof of completion of qualifiers to the Iditarod prior to submitting an entry.
- Rookie mushers are also required to furnish a reference on the form furnished by the ITC, at the time of submitting an entry. The reference must be from an Iditarod musher who is familiar with the rookie, must certify that the rookie has been informed about and understands the physical and mental aspects of the Iditarod, as

well as the wilderness and mushing skills necessary for contesting the race. The reference must be available for candid consultation by race officials and the qualifying board.

Qualifying Review Board:

- All rookie and veteran musher's qualifications will be reviewed by a Qualifying Review Board. The board will meet within 30 days of the initial sign-up and thereafter monthly. Mushers will be notified of acceptance or rejection. The Qualifying Review Board will be composed of five (5) people recommended by the Rules Committee and appointed by the Board of Directors and the decision to accept or reject any musher will be made by the Qualifying Review Board. The decision of the Qualifying Review Board will be final and binding.
- All entries shall be considered accepted within 30 days. Within those 30 days, the QRB may decide to reject an entry, or impose additional qualification criteria. In the case of additional qualification criteria being required, mushers shall have 30 days from notification to either withdraw their entry with full refund or accept the QRB decision and proceed with regular ITC deadlines

Standards for ITC Approved Qualifying Races

All qualification Races will be approved by the ITC based on the following criteria:

1. Races wishing to become approved as a qualifier must apply to Iditarod prior to August 31. As part of the application, races must state the qualification of the race organizational committee as well as what experience mushers competing in said race may gain in their preparation for Iditarod. The ITC Rules Committee shall perform an annual review of all qualifiers during its Fall meeting, no later than September 30.
2. Qualifying Races will have a minimum distance of a certified 150 miles.
3. Qualifying Races will have at least one licensed veterinarian on race courses until the last team is off the trail.
4. Qualifying Races will submit for each qualifying musher a completed "Musher Assessment Form" (Report Card) provided by the ITC to the participating Qualifying Races.

ITC Kennel Standards Agreement

- All mushers who enter the 2026 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race must review and certify that their kennel (or the kennel their dogs are housed) meets the ITC Kennel Standards as set out by MUSH with PRIDE in their 2019 Kennel Inspection Document.

Musher Meetings:

- Rookies must attend a rookie musher meeting the weekend of December 6th and 7th, 2025, time and place to be determined.
- All mushers must attend the pre-race musher meeting Thursday, March 5, 2026 starting at 9:00 a.m.
- A fine may be assessed for tardiness at either the rookie meeting or pre-race musher meeting.

Musher Draw and Starting Positions:

- All mushers qualified to race must be present at the pre-race banquet on Thursday, March 5, 2026. Each musher will personally draw his/her starting position.
- The drawing for positions will be divided into two groups. All entries received or postmarked by June 28, 2025, and have paid their entry fee and provided the required paperwork to the ITC will draw for the first starting positions. The remaining mushers who enter in any manner after June 28, 2025, will draw in the second group for starting position.

Rule 2 -- Entries: Entries will be accepted from June 28, 2025, until Friday November 28, 2025 by the Iditarod Trail Committee (ITC), 2100 S Knik Goose Bay Road, Wasilla, Alaska 99654. Kennels entering must indicate the musher's name with their entry. A submission will not be considered complete until the entry fee is paid in full and the following paperwork is signed and turned in: **the Race Application, the Participant's Release, the Nome Housing Form, the Kennel Standards Agreement and the W-9 tax form.** In the case of rookies, the reference and qualification materials must be received concerning the qualifying races. The Local Contact forms and the Dog Care Agreement (found online) must be completed **no later than February 2nd, 2026. Non-compliance will result in a fine.** Food drops will not be accepted until the dog care agreement and the two local contact forms are turned in.

Entries may be presented to the ITC in person by the musher, online, by fax, email or mail. An entry is complete when all outstanding fines are paid, any penalties or censures are complete, and any legal action between the musher and ITC is resolved.

The maximum number of entries for the 2026 race will be one hundred (100). Once the maximum one hundred is reached, a waiting list will be established, on a first-come, first-served basis. To qualify for the waiting list, the Race Application, the Participant's Release and the Nome housing form must be completed and turned in, and a one-hundred dollar (\$100.00) non-refundable fee paid. If an entrant withdraws from the list of one hundred entrants, the name at the top of the waiting list will be moved up to the entry list, upon receipt of the entry fee in full. The slot will be held open for no more than seven (7) days after notification, before it will be offered to the next name on the waiting list.

Entries postmarked after June 28, 2025 or submitted in any other manner after that date will be entered in the second drawing.

The ITC reserves the right to reject any entry due to entry number limitations and to reject any entry not deemed in conformance with these policies and rules or from mushers who do not exemplify the spirit and principle of the Iditarod Trail Committee as set forth in the rules, policies, bylaws and mission statement. The decision to reject any entry will be made by the Qualifying Review Board. The decision of the Qualifying Review Board will be final and binding.

No one convicted of a charge of animal abuse or neglect, as such is defined under Alaska law, may enter the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

Rule 3 -- Entry Fee: The entry fee for 2026 is \$4,000. \$2,000 of which the musher is

responsible for and includes Iditarod membership dues, is payable in US funds on or after June 28, 2025. This entry fee must be received by the ITC by close of business or postmarked by November 28, 2025. Payment of the \$2,000 constitutes the musher's intention to enter the race and acknowledges that the musher agrees to comply with these policies and rules.

Any entry received after November 28, 2025 must be accompanied by a \$4,000 non-refundable fee in addition to the \$2,000 fee previously paid by the musher. The qualified musher will be allowed to enter after all normal policies and procedures have been met, the \$2,000 entry fee has been received, the waiting list has been exhausted, and another musher withdraws. No musher will be allowed to sign up after February 6, 2026.

* If you are a past champion, you have a Lifetime membership and your entry fee is \$50 less than that listed above.

Upon written request, mushers withdrawing from the race on or before 12:00 noon, October 2, 2025 will receive \$2,000 of their entry fee. Upon written request, mushers withdrawing after Noon on October 2, 2025 and before the close of business on November 3, 2025 will receive \$1,000 of their paid entry fee. After November 3, 2025, no part of the entry fee will be refunded.

Entry fees received that are not in compliance with this policy shall be refunded and the musher shall not be allowed to participate.

Rule 4 -- Substitutes: Substitute drivers will be allowed only in cases of emergency and only if approved by the Race Marshal prior to the re-start of the Race.

Rule 5-- Race Start and Re-Start: The official starting date and time for the 2026 race will be March 7, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. in Anchorage, Alaska.

For the ceremonial start, teams will be comprised of 12 dogs. There shall be two drivers with the following configuration only- 1) one competing musher on the primary sled, 2) one Iditarider in the basket and 3) one second musher (who is capable of driving and controlling a team of dogs on their own) on a tag sled pulled behind the main sled or on the main sled if the sled is a tandem (double handlebar) style. No additional parties are allowed. A team may have no more than two (2) dogs abreast for both the start and restart.

The re-start will be on Sunday March 8, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. Teams will leave the re-start line in the same order as they left Anchorage on Saturday, March 7.

The race will be held as scheduled regardless of weather conditions. The course covers approximately 1,000 miles of mostly arctic wilderness. The trail will be broken and marked prior to the race, but due to weather conditions there will be no guarantee of broken trail during the race. The starting place and/or re-starting place may be changed by the Race Marshal due to weather and/or trail conditions. A handler may be required at the start and/or re-start at the discretion of the Race Marshal.

Rule 6 -- Race Timing: For elapsed time purposes, the race will be a common start event. Each musher's total elapsed time will be calculated using 2:00 p.m., Sunday March 8, 2026, as the starting time. Teams will leave the start and the re-start in intervals of not less than two minutes, and the time differential will be adjusted during the twenty-four (24) hour

mandatory layover. No time will be kept at the Saturday event.

If you missed your starting time you will leave two minutes after the musher who drew the last starting position has left. Succeeding late start teams will leave in succeeding order. Time differential for late starters will be calculated according to their scheduled starting time rather than the actual starting time. The mushers will be given their starting and re-starting intervals at the mushers' meeting

Rule 7 -- Advertising, Public Relations & Publicity: The Iditarod Trail Committee has the unqualified and unrestricted authority to authorize the photographing and collecting of information about the race and all participants therein, and to use such photographs and information for its use in advertising, public relations or other publicity purposes. Each musher shall sign any and all documents as may be requested by the Iditarod Trail Committee.

Rule 8 -- Media: Interviews and/or video graphic opportunities shall be granted to credentialed members of the media at the discretion of the individual musher prior to, during, and following the Race, utilizing the following as specific guidelines:

- Only the broadcast rights holder shall be granted live interviews and/or video graphic opportunities from two hours prior to the start of the Race and until one hour has elapsed following arrival in Nome.
- In the event that more than one camera crew is present in any checkpoint, the first opportunity for an interview shall be granted to the rights holder.
- No special arrangements for the carrying of the broadcasting and/or recording equipment of any sort may be made by any musher without the express written approval of the CEO.

A musher will use his/her best personal effort to ensure that the spirit of these guidelines is adhered to. Alleged violation(s) will be reported to the ITC Board of Directors. Flagrant or knowing violations of these guidelines shall be subject to penalties assessed by the ITC Board of Directors including, but not limited to, disqualification and the potential forfeiture of his or her entire purse winnings.

Rule 9 -- Awards Presentation: All mushers who have crossed the finish line up to two (2) hours before the awards presentation must be present and the winner must have his/her lead dog(s) present for recognition. Any musher crossing the finish line who is able to attend the awards presentation ceremony prior to its beginning, will be included in the awards presentation ceremony in the proper order. All mushers reaching the banquet before its conclusion will be introduced and given the opportunity to appear before the audience.

Rule 10 -- Scratched Mushers: ITC will provide transportation to either Anchorage or Nome for any musher who scratches from the race, including his or her dogs and accompanying gear. A musher must accompany the team to a destination selected by the ITC. A fine may be assessed if promotional material is not turned in.

Rule 11 -- Purse: The 2026 purse will be a minimum of \$650,000. The highest percentages

paid to places 1-20, and includes \$2,000.00 for places 21 through the last musher to finish the race.

Musher Conduct and Competition

Rule 12 -- Checkpoints: A musher must personally sign in at each checkpoint before continuing, except at the re-start.

Rule 13 -- Mandatory Stops: A musher must personally sign in and out to start and complete all mandatory stops.

Twenty Four-Hour Stop: A musher must take one mandatory twenty-four (24) hour stop at an official checkpoint during the race. The starting differential will be adjusted during each team's twenty-four (24) hour stop. It is the musher's responsibility to remain for the entire twenty-four hour period plus starting differential. The ITC will give each musher the required time information prior to leaving the starting line.

Eight Hour Mandatory Stops: In addition to the mandatory twenty-four (24) hour stop, a musher must take one eight (8) hour stop on the Yukon River, including Shageluk in odd numbered years, and one eight (8) hour stop at White Mountain.

None of the mandatory stops may be combined.

Rule 14 -- Bib: A musher is required to wear his/her official ITC bib from the start and re-start, according to direction from the Race Marshal at the mushers' meeting, and the bib may be carried from the White Mountain checkpoint to Safety checkpoint. The musher must wear the bib in a visible fashion from Safety Checkpoint to Nome. The winner shall continue to wear the bib through the lead dog ceremony. All promotional material, except the bib, must be returned to the ITC at the finish line, or in the case of mushers who scratch, to the official accepting the musher's scratch form.

Rule 15 -- Sled: A musher has a choice of sled subject to the requirement that some type of sled or toboggan must be drawn. The sled or toboggan must be capable of hauling any injured or fatigued dogs under cover, plus equipment and food. Braking devices must be constructed to fit between the runners and not to extend beyond the tails of the runners. No more than three (3) sleds can be used by a musher during the race after the re-start. No more than two (2) sleds can be shipped beyond the re-start. Should a musher use another musher's sled for any reason that will be considered one (1) of the three (3) allowable sleds. These sleds may be used at the musher's discretion. Sleds or mushers may not be assisted with sails or wheels. Ski poles are allowed. No other sled exchanges are permitted except that a sled damaged beyond repair may be replaced if approved by an official. Once a sled has been left behind, it cannot be transported along the trail. It cannot be used again unless approved by the Race Marshal as a replacement for a broken sled. One trailer may be drawn and is to be considered one of the three (3) allowable sleds.

Rule 16 -- Mandatory Items: A musher must have with him/her the following items at all times, from the Restart until the teams finish in Nome. These mandatory items are not required during the ceremonial start:

- Proper cold weather sleeping bag weighing a minimum of 5 lbs.
- Ax, head to weigh a minimum of 1-3/4 lbs., handle to be at least 22" long.
- One operational pair of snowshoes with bindings, each snowshoe to be at least 252 square inches in size.
- Any promotional material provided by the ITC.
- Eight booties for each dog in the sled or in use.
- One operational cooker and pot capable of boiling at least three (3) gallons of water at one time.
- Veterinarian notebook, to be presented to the veterinarian at each checkpoint.
- An adequate amount of fuel to bring three (3) gallons of water to a boil.
- Functional non-chafing harness for each dog in team and a functional neckline.
- An insulated dog coat for each dog in the team that can be used while running and or resting.

When leaving a checkpoint adequate emergency dog food must be on the sled. (This will be carried in addition to what you carry for routine feeding and snacking.)

Gear will be checked at the Re-Start and during the 24-hour layover for conformity to minimum standards as set forth above. Gear may be checked at any other time during the Race at the discretion of the Race Marshal and or the Race Judges. Gear may be checked at all checkpoints except Safety.

Vet books will be signed by a veterinarian or in the absence of a veterinarian may be signed by a designated race official. The musher will also sign the vet book.

Rule 17 -- Dog Maximums and Minimums: The maximum number of dogs a musher may start the race with is sixteen (16) dogs. A musher must have at least twelve (12) dogs on the line to start the race. At least five (5) dogs must be on the towline at the finish line. No dogs may be added to a team after the re-start of the race. All dogs must be either on the towline or hauled as to Rule 46 and cannot be led behind the sled or allowed to run loose. Upon arrival at a checkpoint and as part of the check-in procedure, mushers must announce to the checker the total number of dogs in their team including dogs on the towline, inside their sled bag and any dogs carried within an enclosure not readily visible. A checker, race official or race veterinarian may request that mushers visibly produce all dogs for verification before the check is complete.

Rule 18 -- Unmanageable Teams: A musher may seek the aid of others to control an unmanageable team. Dogs demonstrating aggressive behavior and deemed by the Race Marshal to be a risk to other people or dogs will be withdrawn from the race.

Rule 19 -- Driverless Team: A team and driver must complete the entire race trail including checking in at all required locations. A driverless team or loose dog may be stopped and secured by anyone. The driver may recover his/her team either on foot, with assistance from another musher or mechanized vehicle and continue the race. Motorized assistance must be reported to an official at the next checkpoint. If mechanized help is used and advantage has been gained, the Race Marshal may impose appropriate sanctions.

Rule 20 -- Teams Tied Together: Two or more teams may not be tied together except in an emergency. Any team so involved must notify officials at the next checkpoint.

Rule 21 -- Motorized Vehicles: A musher may not be accompanied by or accept assistance from any motorized vehicle that gives help to the musher, including aircraft and snow machines, except when recovering a loose dog or driverless team.

Rule 22 -- Sportsmanship: All mushers must use civil conduct and act in a sportsmanlike manner throughout the race. Abusive treatment of anyone is prohibited.

Rule 23 -- Good Samaritan Rule: A musher will not be penalized for aiding another musher in an emergency. Incidents must be explained to race officials at the next checkpoint.

Rule 24 -- Interference: A musher may not tamper with another musher's dogs, food or gear or interfere in any manner with the progress of another team.

Rule 25 -- Tethering: All dogs must be physically tethered at all times.

Rule 26 -- Passing: When one team approaches within fifty (50) feet of another team, the team behind shall have the immediate right of way upon demand. The musher ahead must stop the dogs and hold them to the best of his/her ability for a maximum of one minute or until the other team has passed, whichever occurs first. The passed team must remain behind at least fifteen (15) minutes before demanding the trail.

Rule 27 -- Parking: A musher must select a campsite off the race trail so that the team cannot interfere with other teams, i.e., no snacking of dogs on the trail. A musher needing to stop momentarily must not interfere with the progress of another team. Teams must be parked at checkpoints in places that do not interfere with the movements of other teams and mushers. A musher is responsible for properly securing an unattended team at all times. No parking or camping is permitted within one (1) trail mile of checkpoints

Rule 28 -- Accommodations: Mushers may only use officially authorized accommodations. Accommodations and or hospitality outside checkpoints must be a) open to all race participants and b) locations made notice of at the mushers' meeting prior to the start of the Race.

Rule 29-- Litter: No litter of any kind may be left on the trail, in camps, or in checkpoints. All material remaining in checkpoints must be left in designated areas. In localized holding area and on the trail, excessive left over dog food is considered litter. For purposes of these rules, straw is not considered litter. Straw must be removed from plastic bags before it is taken from the holding area at checkpoint.

Rule 30 -- Use of Drugs and Alcohol: Alcohol or drug impairment, the use of prohibited drugs by mushers, and positive results on drug or alcohol tests administered during a Race are each prohibited. Violations of this policy shall result in disqualification from a particular Race, and may result in ineligibility from participation for a specified period of time in future Races.

All mushers will be subject to drug and alcohol testing, including but not limited to urine, saliva, breathalyzer testing, under any of the following circumstances:

- Whenever a race official reasonably suspects that the musher is under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- On a random basis, either individually or as a group;

- A random group or all mushers on a date or dates to be determined within thirty days in advance of the start of the Race;
- The first fixed number of mushers who arrive at a stated checkpoint (for example, the first thirty mushers to arrive in White Mountain).

For purposes of this drug use policy, drugs will be defined in the Prohibited List which will be distributed annually no later than four months prior to the start of the Race. For purposes of implementing this policy, details regarding the Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) procedures and deadlines for the 2026 race will also be distributed no later than four months prior to the start of the Race.

To the extent practical under the unique circumstances of the Race, drug and alcohol testing will be conducted in a manner consistent with accepted industry procedures and/or U.S. Department of Health and Human Services standards. Where applicable, urine samples will be collected in accordance with the procedures described in Alaska Stat. § 23.10.630.

Urine testing for drug use will be conducted using a split sample method. If Sample A results in an adverse analytical finding, the musher will be offered the opportunity to elect to have Sample B tested at an approved laboratory. If sampling results in an adverse analytical finding, then the musher will be informed of the test results within ten days of a positive test result being communicated to ITC and a hearing will be scheduled as soon thereafter as is practical. The results of any hearing will be released publicly. Due to the nature of Saliva testing there is no split sample available or collected for re-test, and the laboratory results will be final.

Breathalyzer testing will be used to detect alcohol impairment which is defined as a .04% BAC. Discipline may be imposed immediately by the Race Marshal in the event of a finding of alcohol impairment.

Urine or saliva testing will be used to detect the use of prohibited drugs by mushers, which is defined as an adverse analytical finding to a drug test administered during the Race.

A refusal to participate in drug or alcohol testing may result in immediate withdrawal from the Race. Adulteration of a test specimen may be treated as a refusal to participate in drug or alcohol testing.

Nothing in this policy is intended to require drug or alcohol testing before a musher is sanctioned for suspected drug use or alcohol or drug impairment that is supported by other evidence. Nothing in this policy is intended to require drug or alcohol testing before a musher is sanctioned for violations of any other Rules, including those relating to dog care.

Rule 31 -- Outside Assistance: No planned physical help is allowed throughout the Race. All care and feeding of dogs will be done only by that team's musher. All dog maintenance and care of dog teams and gear in checkpoints will be done in the designated localized holding area. A musher relinquishing the care of his/her team to leave the checkpoint and or village without approval of the Race Marshal must withdraw from the Race. Common resources available to all mushers will not be considered outside assistance, however, in-person wake up calls for mushers will not be permitted.

Snow machine use to assist a specific musher by breaking trail or impeding the progress of a competitor by damaging the existing trail is strictly prohibited.

Rule 32-- No Man's Land: No man's land is from the marker at Ft. Davis to the official finish line.

Rule 33 -- One Musher per Team: Only one musher will be permitted per team and that musher must complete the entire race.

Rule 34 -- Killing of Game Animals: In the event that an edible big game animal, i.e., moose, caribou, buffalo, is killed in defense of life or property, the musher must gut the animal and report the incident to a race official at the next checkpoint. Following teams must help gut the animal when possible. No teams may pass until the animal has been gutted and the musher killing the animal has proceeded. Any other animal killed in defense of life or property must be reported to a race official, but need not be gutted.

Rule 35 -- Electronic Devices: A musher may carry and use any two-way communication device(s), including, but not necessarily limited to, a cell and/or satellite telephone. Use of such devices may not be used for any media purposes during the course of the race unless expressly approved in advance by ITC.

A musher may also carry an emergency locator transmitter (ELT), a Spot™, or other similar satellite tracking device. However, activation of any help or emergency signal, including accidental activation, may make a musher ineligible to continue and may result in an automatic withdrawal from the race. Use of a GPS is also permitted.

Rule 36 -- Competitiveness: A team may be withdrawn that is out of the competition and is not in a position to make a valid effort to compete. The Race Marshal may consider, but is not limited to, weather, trail conditions and the overall pace of the Race when invoking this rule. A musher whose conduct, constitutes an unreasonable risk of harm to him/her, dogs or other persons may also be withdrawn.

Veterinary Issues and Dog Care Rules

Rule 37 -- Dog Care:

- Dogs must be maintained in good condition. All water and food must be ingested voluntarily.
- Dogs may not be brought into shelters except for race veterinarians' medical examination or treatment. Dogs must be returned outside as soon as such examination or treatment is completed unless the dog is returned from the race.
- There will be no cruel or inhumane treatment of dogs. Cruel or inhumane treatment involves any action or inaction, which causes preventable pain or suffering to a dog.
- If a returned dog is in critical condition or a life threatening condition, the musher may be held up to eight (8) hours for investigation.
- At White Mountain, a Race Judge will establish a "starting line" for departure toward Nome. Mushers may lead their team from their straw to the line, however, no team is allowed to advance beyond this line unless all dogs are

on the gangline, the musher is at the rear of the sled, and the team is moving under their own power. No assistance beyond this line by physical contact with the neckline, tugline, gangline or intimidation techniques are allowed, except that a musher may physically assist their team with normal impediments including tangles or taking the wrong trail. If a team fails to depart as described from this line, a Race Judge will direct the team to return to the checkpoint where they must remain for an additional eight hours before another departure attempt may be made. This decision by the Race Judge may occur at any time once the team has attempted to leave the line. If the team will not leave as described a second time, a team may be withdrawn or disqualified.

Rule 38 -- Equipment and Team Configuration: Equipment and team configurations deemed unsafe by race officials are prohibited. A team may have no more than two (2) dogs abreast.

Rule 39 -- Drug Use: A brief overview of canine drug use and canine drug testing is included in these Official Rules 2026. The Canine Drug Testing Manual has been developed to serve as a support document for Rule 39. Detailed discussions of topics relevant to Rule 39 are included in that manual, including the science of drug testing, definitions of terminology related to drug testing, specifically permitted medications, classification of prohibited substances, a comprehensive list of prohibited substances, the process for determining a violation, the appeals process and potential penalties. Mushers are required to review Rule 39 and the Canine Drug Testing Manual 2026 in preparation for Iditarod 2026. A copy of the Drug Testing Manual may be obtained through the ITC.

No oral or topical drug which may suppress the signs of illness or injury may be used on a dog. No injectable may be used in dogs participating in the Race. No other drugs or other artificial means may be used to drive a dog or cause a dog to perform or attempt to perform beyond its natural ability.

Megestrol acetate (Ovaban) is permitted for use as an estrus suppressant. Newer products may become available that are approved for use in the USA, and may be allowed by the Chief Veterinarian. Race veterinarians may utilize any of the listed drugs or other prohibited drugs necessary to maintain a dog's health, however, such dogs will be withdrawn from the race.

Drug Testing:

- Dogs are subject to the collection of urine, blood or hair samples by ITC authorized personnel at any point from the pre-race examination to four (4) hours after the team's finish. In all cases, the musher or their designee must be with the dogs when the samples are collected so that a signature can be provided by a witness representing that kennel. In addition, it is advised that the musher or a designee remains with the dogs from their arrival in the Nome Dog Lot and until sample (typically urine) collection is completed. All samples will be sealed and signed for before the collection process is considered complete.
- A musher must assist in collecting samples whenever requested. If testing of a dog reveals any of the prohibited drugs, this rule has been

violated regardless of when such drugs were administered to the dog. Drug test results will be made available to the musher upon request.

- Mushers are cautioned to ensure that food, meat, snacks and veterinary supplies do not contain prohibited drugs.
- Mushers will be held strictly liable for all positive tests for prohibited drugs and procedures of dogs in their team for purposes of application of and sanctions administered pursuant to this Rule 39 unless they can establish, to the satisfaction of a review panel comprised of the Race Marshal, the Chief Veterinarian and three independent professionals appointed by the Board President, by clear and convincing evidence that the positive tests resulted from causes completely beyond their control.
- The clear and convincing evidence may include polygraph testing offered by the musher or required by the ITC, as well as other types of evidence. The costs of any polygraph evidence shall be borne by the party offering or requiring it. In all cases, the polygraph testing must be conducted by a facility approved by the ITC.
- Any musher who is found to be responsible, either directly or indirectly, for tampering with another musher's dogs, foods, snacks or supplies, or tampering in any other manner, which effects the results of drug testing results of another musher's dogs will be subject to discipline of disqualification and/or a ban from the Race.

Rule 40 -- Pre-Race Veterinary Exam: Every dog must undergo health examination and screening. Veterinary paperwork below must be delivered to ITC headquarters by the deadline of 5:00 P.M. on Wednesday, March 4th, 2026. Non-compliance will result in a fine. No photos of paperwork will be accepted.

1. Pre-Race Exam forms (one for each dog with proof of vaccination)
2. Dog Microchip Identification Sheet (maximum 20)
3. Verification of Deworming Form
4. Veterinarian Signature Form (the letter from the Chief Veterinarian addressing the veterinarian who performs the physical exams which must be signed along with each Pre-Race Exam Form),

Mushers must initiate conversation regarding scheduling of appointments for blood tests and ECGs (EKGs) on first come first served basis, beginning at 8:00 AM on Sunday, December 7, 2025, and must be done no later than Friday, December 26, 2025. Non-compliance will result in a fine

The Chief Veterinarian will have the authority to deny entry to any dog if, after consultation with a veterinary cardiologist or internist (when available), it is the professional opinion of the Chief Veterinarian that the dog has an abnormality which may predispose it to a significant risk of injury or death.

A musher must have the team physicals performed by the veterinary staff at ITC Headquarters on Wednesday, March 4, 2026 or by another veterinarian with a current license in good standing, on or after Saturday, February 21, 2026. The following conditions

will prohibit a dog from participating: seizures (epilepsy), syncope (fainting) , pregnancy, too thin, and/or open wounds that cannot be healed or protected by race start.

A musher is permitted to have a maximum of 24 dogs screened (microchips, EKG's and blood work) in preparation for Iditarod 2025. All 24 dogs must be screened at the original appointment date. There will be no additional screening after that time. From these, a musher may select a maximum of 20 dogs for listing on the Dog Microchip Identification Sheet. To be listed on the Microchip Identification Sheet, dogs must have had pre-race screening by Iditarod personnel, including a documented microchip implant number, an ECG (EKG) recording and blood work and physical examination. The musher may select his/her dogs for the start from any dogs listed on a Dog Microchip Identification Sheet. Dogs for the re-start may be selected from any dogs listed on a Dog Microchip Identification Sheet and not run in another team on Saturday. The maximum number of dogs permitted at the start will be determined by the Race Marshal. A maximum of 16 dogs may be selected for the re-start. Once a dog has run in a team, that dog cannot be switched to another team.

All dogs entered in the race must have current Distemper/Hepatitis/Lepto/Parvo/Parainfluenza (DHLPP), Rabies and injectable, nasal or oral Bordetella vaccinations. Written proof of these vaccinations, except for Rabies, must come from a veterinarian or certified lay vaccinator, or if administered by the musher, records must include the type of vaccine, proof of purchase (i.e., receipt) and date of vaccination, in writing.

The Distemper/Hepatitis/Lepto/Parvo/Parainfluenza vaccine must have been given between April 1, 2025 and March 4, 2026.

The Bordetella (intra-nasal, oral or injectable) vaccine must have been given between October 1, 2025 and March 4, 2026.

Proof of Rabies vaccination must come from a licensed veterinarian or certified lay vaccinator. Rabies vaccines must be given no later than March 4, 2026 and must be current through April 1, 2026, according to Alaska State regulations.

All teams must be de-wormed with an ITC approved dewormer that includes coverage for Echinococcus multilocularis within 10 days of race start (on or after Wednesday, February 25th, 2026. Mushers should be prepared to pay for this medication if it is not made available through the ITC.

For those mushers who have volunteered and signed consent forms, ITC will be allowed to collect samples and gather data from returned dogs and dogs that have completed the race, in the effort to gather information to improve dog care.

Rule 41 -- Jurisdiction and Care: All dogs entered in the race are under the jurisdiction of the Race Marshal from the time they enter the staging area at the start until 72 hours after they have been released by the ITC veterinarians or 48 hours after the final musher finishes. The Chief Veterinarian shall have the authority to determine in his or her exclusive discretion whether any dogs require veterinary care and to select the provider, including treatment by medical specialists and or 24-hour care facilities, prior to an animal's release. In such case, financial responsibility shall be borne by the musher. If the financial responsibility is not satisfied within 30 days of the banquet, finishing status will be withdrawn until satisfied. In addition, the Chief Veterinarian will have immediate access to medical records and updated

status reports of all returned dogs for up to 72 hours after their release. In the event that a death occurs within the 72-hour period following release, an ITC representative will participate in a necropsy of that animal.

Any issues of concern regarding musher dog care will be reviewed within 30 days of the race's conclusion by a Dog Care Panel, consisting of three independent investigators, with consultation from the Race Marshal, Chief Veterinarian and any other professional experts deemed necessary by that panel. The ITC Board of Directors will establish the Dog Care Panel prior to the race start.

Race rules regarding MUSER CONDUCT and VETERINARY ISSUES & DOG CARE shall be in effect for each individual team from the Anchorage start until a team that scratches, is withdrawn or is disqualified and is clear of the trail, crosses the finish line, completes required canine drug testing and/or departs from the Nome Dog Lot, depending on which of the above represents the last contact with ITC Race Officials and/or staff members. Such Rules that define a time period to which they apply may continue beyond a teams' last contact with ITC Race Officials and/or staff members.

Rule 42 -- Expired Dog: The Iditarod holds firmly that no dog should suffer harm or death in connection to the race. However, it is understood that, in rare circumstances, dog harm or death can occur through no fault of the musher. Our policy is therefore, that:

“any dog death that occurs during the conduct of the race will result in immediate (a) voluntary scratch by the musher with right of assistance under Rule 10 or (b) withdrawal with right of assistance under Rule 51 (such withdrawal does not imply any deliberate misconduct or violation as set forth in Rule 51), unless the death was caused, as determined by the Race Marshal, to be due to the inherent risks of wilderness travel (example, moose encounter), nature of trail, or force beyond the control of the musher (these causes are all referred to as an “Unpreventable Hazard”).

Any dog that expires on the trail must be covered and taken by the musher to a checkpoint. The musher may transport the dog to either the checkpoint just passed, or the upcoming checkpoint. An expired dog report must be completed by the musher and presented to a race official along with the dog. **At this time the musher shall scratch or be withdrawn from the race, except in the case of an Unpreventable Hazard.**

This rule remains under consideration.

All dog deaths will be treated as a priority, with every effort being made to determine the cause of death in a thorough and reliable manner.

- The Chief Veterinarian will cause a necropsy to be carried out by a board certified veterinary pathologist at the earliest opportunity and shall make every attempt to determine the cause of death.
- If a board certified veterinary pathologist is not available to perform the necropsy within the time frame to preserve the tissues appropriately, (as determined by the Race Marshal), the gross necropsy and tissue collection will be performed by a trail veterinarian following the guidelines in the Musher and Veterinary Handbook.
- These tissues will then be examined by a board certified pathologist. A musher will remain at the initial reporting checkpoint for up to, but no longer than, twelve hours to

commence the investigation. If the Race Marshal determines that the dog death is due to an Unpreventable Hazard, the musher will be allowed to continue the race immediately upon this determination being made. This waiting period is not to be used as a punishment of the musher. If a determination of an Unpreventable Hazard is made, a musher can then continue the race, but **he/she** must remain available for future communication to assist in the investigation. The musher and or his/her representative have the option to be present during the trail evaluation and necropsy.

- All dog deaths will be reviewed within 30 days of the race's conclusion by a Dog Care Panel, consisting of three independent investigators, with consultation from the Race Marshal, Chief Veterinarian and any other professional experts deemed necessary by that panel. The musher involved will also be consulted and allowed to present input to the Dog Care Panel. The Dog Care Panel shall issue a report to the ITC Board discussing its conclusions on the cause of the dog death in order to gain insights that may help shape future race rules or protocols to achieve zero dog deaths. The Dog Care Panel shall also make a determination in its report on whether disqualification is warranted under the standards set forth below.
- The ITC Board of Directors will establish the Dog Care Panel prior to the race start.

Dog deaths resulting in disqualification, as determined by the Dog Care Panel, are:

- Due to musher neglect, cruel, inhumane and/or abusive treatment.
 - Cause of death is heat stress, hyperthermia or hypothermia.
 - A musher will be disqualified if he/she had been advised in writing by a race veterinarian or judge to drop the dog at a previous checkpoint, but opted not to do so, unless the cause of death is clearly unrelated to this written recommendation.

It is the policy of the ITC to report a dog death to the public in a timely fashion. The ITC will accomplish this by:

- The Race Marshal shall immediately issue a press release to members of the media identifying the dog's death
- Immediately following the gross necropsy, the Race Marshal will notify the musher of the results and will issue a press release containing the findings and the circumstances of the death.

Rule 43 -- Dog Description: Only dogs suitable for arctic travel will be permitted to enter the race. Suitability will be determined by race officials.

Rule 44 -- Dog Tags: The ITC will provide drivers with dog tags at the mushers' banquet. All dogs must wear tags and the tag numbers must correspond with the dog name and tag numbers written in the vet book. Only current tags are permitted.

Rule 45 -- Returned Dogs: All dogs that are returned from the Race must be left at a designated checkpoint with a completed and signed returned dog form. Any returned dog must be left with four (4) pounds of dog food.

- Before returning a dog, mushers must remove all gear (harness, booties, leggings, etc.) except for the dog collar. Dogs may be left with dog coats, but the coats will be removed for dog transit and will become property of Iditarod with no guarantee of return to the musher.

Returned dogs may be moved from the originating checkpoint to the closest dog collection area at Anchorage, McGrath, Unalakleet or Nome. Dogs will then be collected from McGrath and Unalakleet and will be shipped to Anchorage for final review. These costs are covered by the ITC. However, dogs may be shipped from the collection areas to a location designated by the musher at the musher's expense.

- Dogs returned in Anchorage, Nome and the re-start are the musher's responsibility.

Rule 46 -- Hauling Dogs: Dogs must be hauled in a secure, protected, and humane manner. The musher may not allow any of their dogs to be hauled by another team.

Food Drops and Logistics

Rule 47 -- Shipping of Food and Gear: A musher must comply with shipping directions provided by the ITC. Each container must be clearly marked with name and destination and must weigh no more than 50 pounds. No boxes of any kind may be used as the primary container. No straw, charcoal, fuel or other combustible material, or hazardous materials may be shipped through ITC food drops. AA and AAA lithium batteries only may only be shipped in the original packaging as supplied by the manufacturer. No cookers, plastic buckets, coolers or dog dishes may be shipped except with any sled that is shipped. Used items may be removed from checkpoints with dropped sleds, by return mail or through the ITC.

Perishable food must be delivered to the ITC in a frozen state.

All mandatory food must be sent through Iditarod food drops. The ITC will provide and ship straw and fuel for the teams to the checkpoints. Additional food and gear may be shipped prior to the start but must be shipped to the checker. Gear or food drops damaged or lost may be replaced upon approval of the Race Marshal or designee.

Food drop payment must be received by the ITC at time of delivery.

A musher's personal gear, equipment and supplies may not be transported along the trail by mechanized means without the consent of the Race Marshal.

Dog food left behind and dog food from scratched, withdrawn and disqualified mushers becomes the property of the ITC and may be used at the discretion of race officials. No dog food may be shipped back in return bags.

Rule 48 -- Shipping Amounts: An adequate amount of food is required to be shipped to the following checkpoints (minimum of 50 pounds combined weight of food (not including ice) and gear.

| | | |
|------------|------------|----------------|
| Skwentna | Cripple | Koyuk |
| Rainy Pass | Galena | Elim |
| Rohn | Ruby | White Mountain |
| Nikolai | Nulato | Safety |
| McGrath | Kaltag | Nome |
| Takotna | Unalakleet | |
| Ophir | Shaktoolik | |

Food and/or gear will not be shipped to the checkpoints of Yentna and Finger Lake. The Safety checkpoint is optional for shipment of gear and/or

food.

Officials, Penalties, Personal Conduct, and Appeals

Rule 49 -- Race Officials: The Race Marshal and judges are responsible for the enforcement of all ITC policies and race rules. Race officials shall consult with the Chief Veterinarian on all matters relating to dog care and treatment.

Rule 50 -- Protests: A musher may protest any action of a competitor or race official that he/she feels is contrary to the intent of these rules. To be recognized as a legitimate protest, any action observed by a musher must be presented in writing at the next checkpoint and in no case more than twenty-four (24) hours after a musher finishes the race.

Rule 51-- Penalties: Policy and rule infractions may result in issuance of warnings, monetary penalties, time penalties, censure, withdrawals or disqualification.

- Within 48 hours, race officials will make every effort to make a competitor aware of a rule infraction and the penalty assessed. Warnings may be issued by any official for first time or minor violations.
- Monetary penalties will be imposed when determined by race officials a rule infraction has occurred and a competitive advantage has not been gained. Monetary penalties may be imposed up to \$2,500 per violation. Such penalties may be deducted from prize money. A musher with unpaid fines may not enter future Iditarod races until such fines are paid.
- Time penalties will be imposed when determined by race officials a rule infraction has occurred and a competitive advantage has been gained. Time penalties require a majority decision of a three-member panel of race officials appointed by the Race Marshal. Time penalties may be imposed up to a maximum of eight (8) hours per infraction and will be added to the twenty- four (24) hour layover, the eight-hour layover on the Yukon River, the eight (8) hour layover at White Mountain, or after the musher finishes in Nome.
- Withdrawal is a process that must be imposed by a three-judge panel, either by a majority or unanimous vote, and which has the effect of involuntarily eliminating the musher and team from the race but which does not imply any deliberate misconduct or violation. The team and musher must leave the trail and will be assisted by the ITC.
- Except as set forth in the case of a dog death under Rule 42, disqualifications require a unanimous decision of a three-member panel of race judges appointed by the Race Marshal. The Chief Veterinarian will be consulted in all cases involving cruel or inhumane treatment. Mushers shall be disqualified for rule infractions involving physical abuse of a dog, or for cheating or deliberate rule infractions that give a musher an unfair advantage over another musher. Mushers may also be disqualified for other acts involving cruel and inhumane treatment. It is intended that the nearest involved officials be included on the panel. The musher will be given the opportunity to present his case to each member of the panel prior to the decision. Disqualified and withdrawn teams must leave the trail or forfeit the right to enter future Iditarods.
- Censure: The Board of Directors, following completion of the race, may censure a musher. A censure may include a warning, either public or private and may eliminate the

musher from future races. A written warning, monetary penalty or disqualification must have occurred before censure.

Rule 52 -- Appeals: Mushers may appeal race official decisions. Appeals pertaining to warnings or monetary fines must be presented in writing to the ITC within ten (10) days of imposition of the penalty or the mushers' finish, whichever occurs later, or 10 days following the decision of the Dog Care Panel under Rule 42, if applicable. Appeals pertaining to withdrawals, disqualifications or time penalties must be presented in writing to ITC within 10 days following the awards banquet. Appeals will be decided by hearing before an appeals board appointed by the president of ITC which will be held within forty-five (45) days of filing the appeal. Review by the appeals board is the exclusive, final and binding remedy for any dispute regarding application of the rules by race officials to a musher and that the decision of the appeals board is non-reviewable either in state or federal court. As censure is imposed by the Board of Directors, and qualification decisions are made by the Qualifying Board, there is no appeal to either and such decisions are final, binding and are non-reviewable either in state or federal court.

Rule 53 -- Personal Conduct:

All Iditarod mushers will be held to a high standard of personal and professional conduct. Musher conduct that is recklessly injurious to the Iditarod, Iditarod competitors, sponsors or anyone associated with the race is strictly prohibited.

Obligation to Self-Report:

Mushers are required to promptly report to the Iditarod Trail Committee any circumstances that may arise during sign-up or during the race which could injure the reputation of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. This includes any pending criminal charges or prosecutions, regardless of the nature of the offense. This rule may be further refined.

Notwithstanding the provisions of **Rule 52**, the sanctions for violation of this rule will be determined at the discretion of the Personal Conduct Committee, which shall make a recommendation to the Board of Directors for consideration and final decision. The sanctions for violation may include forfeiture of entry fee, involuntary withdrawal, retroactive disqualification and disqualification for a year or period of years.