

Gastric Ulcer Study Update from Dr. Michael S. Davis, DVM PhD Dipl ACVIM

Dr. Davis has approved the release of this information to Mush with PRIDE members as a follow-up to the article on gastric ulcers in the Summer 2008 (issue 36) Mush with PRIDE newsletter.

Investigators from Oklahoma State University and Texas A&M University recently completed a study to determine the effectiveness of 2 different over-the-counter medications for the prevention of exercise-induced stomach ulcers in racing sled dogs. The two medications (famotidine - trade name Pepcid, given at a dose of 40 mg twice daily; and omeprazole - trade name Prilosec, given at a dose of 20 mg once daily on an empty stomach and approximately 30 min before a meal) were tested during a 300 mile simulated race which was completed in 52 hrs. The effectiveness of the drugs was evaluated by stomach endoscopy 18 hr after completion of the "race". Both drugs reduced the appearance of clinically-significant stomach lesions, compared to past studies of unmedicated dogs. Omeprazole, when given on an empty stomach to enhance absorption, was superior to famotidine in preventing stomach lesions. The investigators would like to thank Martin Buser and Jon Little for providing the dogs used in this study, and Karen Ramstead for raising the funds that supported the study.

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So, You Want to Start a Tour Business?

"Whistler Bob" Fawcett, Experienced Tour Operator, Whistler Dogsledding

"Hey, Honey. I got a great idea. Let's start a touring business with the dogs. I never thought I'd get laid off, time to put the dogs to work I guess." Are you finding that you are saying such things? Better think long and hard about getting into the touring business before you sink too much more money into your hobby to make it a profession! For some people the transition to tour works. You can make a few bucks taking out the local 4H club or a school party. Or even head to the local ski hill a few times a year for a weekend of tours. For those of us that make a living doing tours full time, it is a tough, relentless way to pay the bills. OK, you're not scared yet. Here are some tips and thoughts for you to ponder.

You got into dogs to be with animals. They are the best co-workers on the planet, right? Low wages, always happy, always glad to see you. The recreational side of mushing and racing is a super way to spend time with loved ones and your troop of canine friends. You go out, do a run, have some fun. If you race, you train hard, do some races, maybe win a little money or a door prize. All in all it is a lot of fun. Touring can also be fun, but it's a lot different.

Tourists have expectations and they don't know what they are most of the time. This is the hard part. You have to guess what they want, you have to guess how to make them happy. Generally, our guests are some of the most interesting and fun-loving folks you'll find. They ask crazy questions, over and over and over and over, oh sorry. They fall off the sleds. They are Iditarod champs after 4 miles, and they are cloud nine at the end of the run having been able to put themselves in your shoes for 2 whole hours.

The tough part of touring is that you never really get to do what you want to do. You can't train that new leader because what if he turns around and tangles up the team? You can't go more than 8-10 miles/hour, because the sled is heavy. You have to watch your best leader dip for snow every 30 feet cause he knows your not going to do anything about it in front of the guests. You are up at the crack of dawn, plowing the road to get to the tours, grooming the trail so it is easy for the guests, "If I have to run behind the sled any more I'm not paying....." You get to feed the dogs, clean up, hope like hell your staff show up.... Sober..... You stress when the economy goes down, you stress when the snow comes late, you stress when your staff fill up your diesel with unleaded.

The Guests arrive. They are horrified at how small and skinny the dogs are. Easy enough, I go over with my Carharts and explain to them the make up of the breed. They are now horrified with me and my smell. OK, Gore-tex and a shower. You explain to them the ancient way of driving a dog team. They yell at your leaders (encouragement, but the whole tour????) the whole way and the tour slows to a crawl. You want to put the one guy in wheel, he looks like a good wheeler. And you notice that lady has open toed shoes..... How did the reservations people let that slip by? They lose their teams, they pass when you tell them not to, and they absolutely love it. Now, don't get me wrong. After over 40,000 guests have gone out on a sled with us, I wouldn't trade my life for anything. But, there is still something to be said about mixing business with pleasure.

I got into touring as a way to spend a winter away from flying. I gained a hobby I will enjoy for my life. Many say, "but you get to be paid to do your passion" You do get paid - when the stars line up and there is enough snow, and enough people at your resort, and the staff show up. You get paid to fix all the chewed harnesses, pay the bills, plow the road, fix the dog box (again), pay the insurance, photocopy more waivers, pay the ad bills, hire more staff, fire more staff, drive a shuttle, and maybe mush a sled now and then. There are few that can make the necessary brain switch to be able to separate the work and pleasure. And that is the hard part. Giving up what you want to do and doing what you have to do. Once you can find that fine line, you will truly have it made. But mind me, it's a tough find.

So before you cash in the severance check, or max out the line of credit, think long and hard. Would you want to share your family with strangers day in and day out? Do you want to open yourself up for everyone to see? Do you keep your little pleasure to yourself, your one escape, the one place where no one but you judges you and your performance? OR, can you make it all work and have a little of everything like my family has found? It's a tough road, but as they say. "SOMEONE HAS TO DO IT!"

-BF



Dr. Tim Hunt's team at the ceremonial start of Iditarod 2009. (Photo by Donna Quante)

Mush with PRIDE has a new discussion group on Yahoo!

Join in the discussions in our newly created Mush with PRIDE yahoo group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mushwithpride/> and follow the easy instructions to become a member (it is FREE!). For those of you using the old PRIDE list, it still works, but we are hoping to migrate over to the Yahoo site soon.

Education Committee Report: Facts in Support of Tethering Sled Dogs

Even mushers who primarily house their dogs in their own homes need some sort of outdoor confinement system to house their dogs during times when the musher can not be present to supervise the dogs and of course mushers with larger teams must usually confine some or all of their sled dogs in an outdoor "dog yard". Whether confining members of a 2-dog skijoring team or a 100+ dog racing kennel, the general considerations and methods of confining the dogs remain the same.

It is Mush with PRIDE's position that tethering sled dogs in the manner recommended in the Mush with PRIDE Sled Dog Care Guidelines is a safe and humane method of confinement that allows healthy social interactions among dogs, minimizes risks of injury to dogs and facilitates husbandry, hygiene and kennel management.

Tethering in the manner described in the Mush with PRIDE Sled Dog Care Guidelines in the multiple-dog kennel setting meets the physical and psychological needs of dogs while accommodating the needs of the community.

- Securely confines dogs to protect them from exposure to injuries or illnesses.
- Facilitates human care and husbandry of the animals leading to increased opportunities for human interaction and socialization.
- Allows dogs to interact freely with their kennel mates while simultaneously protecting dogs from aggressive kennel mates.
- Provides ample space in which the dogs may engage in a full range of species-specific behaviors.
- Provides access to the visual, auditory and olfactory stimuli of the general environment.

The behavioral problems cited by those seeking laws prohibiting tethering dogs are not caused by the method of confinement, but rather are a result of long-term, generalized neglect by the dog's owners.

- Lack of socialization with humans and other animals.
- Lack of training
- Lack of exercise
- Lack of mental stimulation

The studies cited by those seeking laws to prohibit tethering were not scientific studies of animal confinement. Most were epidemiological studies of dog bites and their conclusions do not demonstrate a cause and effect relationship between tethering and dog bites.

Advocates of outlawing tethering as a method of dog confinement frequently misinterpret the results of the studies they cite.

On their website, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) states that a study published in the September 15, 2000, issue of the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* reported that 17 percent of dogs involved in fatal attacks on humans between 1979 and 1998 were restrained on their owners' property at the time of the attack. If that is true, then it is also true that 83% of dogs involved in fatal attacks on humans were NOT restrained on their owner's property at the time of the attack. In other words, this very same study indicates that tethered dogs are almost 5 times less likely to kill a human than dogs that are not restrained.

The best available current scientific evidence supports tethering in the manner described in the Mush with PRIDE Sled Dog Care Guidelines as an effective, safe and humane method of confinement.

The only controlled, scientific study comparing sled dogs primarily confined by tethering on post/swivel systems as described in the Mush with PRIDE Sled Dog Care Guidelines to another confinement system found no significant difference in the behavior of tethered dogs to those confined using other systems. (Reference Houpt K, Reynolds A, Erb H, Sung W, Golden G, Yeon W: "A Comparison of Tethering and Pen Confinement of Dogs." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, vol 4, no 4, 2001: 257-270.)

Depending upon the length of chain, tethering with the post and swivel system recommended by Mush with PRIDE provides each dog with more space to run, play, jump and engage in other species-typical behaviors than required under most animal welfare regulations, even those applicable to dogs in federally regulated industries or even modern research settings.

- 5 foot chains gives each dog an area of slightly more than 78 square feet in which to exercise.
- With 6 foot chains the dogs' play area is increased to about 113 square feet.
- 7 foot chains allow each dog a personal playground of nearly 155 square feet.
- (Reference (Hubrecht R; "Comfortable Quarters for Laboratory Dogs"; Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom.)

The manner of tethering sled dogs recommended by Mush with PRIDE is available on-line at http://www.mushwithpride.org/Guidelines/Dog_Yard.htm

Comment by professional reviewer: "I have thoroughly reviewed the Mush with PRIDE bulletin "Facts in Support of Tethering Sled Dogs" and have found it to be a well researched document that reflects our current knowledge of canine behavior." (Janece Rollet, CCB. December 18, 2008).

Education Committee Report: Caring for Dogs During Tough Times

During this time of international financial uncertainty we should all recognize that an unexpected loss of income, catastrophic medical emergency or many other circumstances can render us incapable of affording our dogs the quality of care they deserve.

Prevention Through Planning: Mushers should have disaster plans detailing how to care for or evacuate dogs in case of a natural disaster. It is equally wise to have a plan in place to manage financial or personal crises.

Many problems can be prevented by controlling the population of your kennel as recommended in the "Keeping Your Kennel the Right Size" section of the Mush with PRIDE Sled Dog Care Guidelines. The Guidelines are available on-line at www.mushwithpride.org. Key steps to keeping your kennel the right size are:

- Acquire dogs thoughtfully, accepting only dogs that can help you meet your mushing goals. Many champion mushers are well-known for limiting the sizes of their kennels.
- Routinely spay or neuter all dogs you do not intend to breed. If cost is an issue, local animal control agencies or animal rescue organizations may be able to refer you to low or no cost spay/neuter projects in your area.
- Build, maintain and diligently use a heat pen to isolate females during estrus.

Recognize that Your Kennel is Facing a Financial Crisis: Evaluate whether your kennel is in a financial crisis anytime unforeseen circumstances make it impossible for you to provide the high quality of care for your dogs that you would normally provide. Some examples might include:

- You are no longer able to afford the quality feed you normally provide.
- You can no longer spend the time necessary to care for your dogs as you would prefer.
- You must delay or avoid seeking veterinary care because of the cost.

When crisis occurs, recognize that it is your responsibility to ensure the best possible care for your dogs in spite of the difficulties. The sooner you take steps to manage the situation the easier it will be to meet that responsibility.

Evaluate Your Resources: Make written time and financial budgets to realistically determine how many dogs you can properly maintain. Accept that in extremely dire circumstances you may have to abandon the sport entirely until you can regain sound financial footing.

Discuss Your Situation with Others: Family, friends, other mushers and those with professional or financial interests in your kennel such as your veterinarian or feed store operator may be able to provide assistance:

- Family members, friends or other mushers may be able to foster some of your dogs or loan you resources until you get back on your feet.
- Veterinarians, feed store operators and others with whom you do business may be able to refer you to sources of assistance such as free or low-cost spay/neuter clinics or vaccination projects.

Seek Professional Help: Animal rescue groups and/or local animal control authorities would usually prefer to help you through tough times rather than shelter and re-home your dogs later. Many can help you find free or low-cost food or other supplies or help you re-home dogs you are unable to keep. Animal control agencies may be more supportive of your efforts or less aggressive in taking adverse legal action if they feel you are making an effective, good-faith effort to resolve the issue in an effective and timely manner.

Re-home Some or All of Your Dogs: If the crisis can not be resolved quickly you may need to re-home some or all of your dogs. Some options for re-homing your team can be found in the "Keeping Your Kennel the Right Size" section of the Mush with PRIDE Sled Dog Care Guidelines. Options include;

- Selling some dogs, especially if your kennel is well known for quality dog care and high performance. In most cases only your youngest or best dogs will be attractive to would-be buyers.
- Placing dogs with other mushers. You may be able to loan or lease some of your dogs, so they can be returned when you are again on firm financial footing. Others may have to be given away to mushers who need them to achieve their own mushing goals.
- Finding pet homes for dogs, especially older dogs and dogs with less athletic ability.

Relinquish Dogs to Rescue Groups or Shelters: If you are unable to properly care for your dogs and have exhausted all other options, consider relinquishing dogs to sled dog rescue organizations, pet dog rescue organizations or animal control authorities.

- Try to avoid overloading any one rescue group or shelter with too many animals at the same time.
- If possible, provide the dogs' pedigrees, veterinary and training records. These documents help tell the dog's story and may make it easier for the rescue or animal control agency to find appropriate homes for athletic, high-drive sled dogs.

Once the crisis is resolved, don't forget to support those who supported you.



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Sled Dog Care Guidelines _____ Quantity \$ _____

Basic sled dog care and training advice from dozens of the most respected mushers. Includes information on dog yards, feeding and watering, training, husbandry, puppies and more. 36-page book \$5 each or \$3.50 each for 10 or more.

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Based on a survey of experienced mushers, covers the basics of safe equipment choices and use. Includes chapters on dog gear, lines, sleds & rigs, skijoring, dog yards, traveling, etc. 36-page book \$5 each or \$3.50 each for 10 or more.

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