

Double Arrow pitches in for sled dogs' health



By Bill Bradshaw

Veterinarians check out 'premier athletes'

ENTERPRISE — Physical fitness checks for the athletes competing in this week's Eagle Cap Extreme Sled Dog Race are among the most important pre-race events going on Wednesday, Jan. 19.

Dr. Randy Greenshields, of Double Arrow Veterinary Clinic in Enterprise, compared the dogs pulling the sleds to Olympic athletes.

"They're premier athletes," the ECX president said Jan. 12. "They're marathon runners."

The checks

The vet checks will happen in Enterprise on Main Street at 9 a.m. and in Joseph on Main Street at 1 p.m.

Mushers must bring their dog teams to one vet check or the other, Greenshields said.

"We try to spread it out. It's part of a big community event," he said. "We try to get people out to see the mushers and the dogs."

Greenshields said the checks are to help make sure the dogs are healthy enough to participate in one of the four grueling races.

In addition to making sure the dogs have no obvious injuries, there are other things the veterinarians will examine them for.

"We make sure they're in good body condition, check their vaccination status and their fitness to race," he said.

Their appearance can tell a vet if the dogs have been well fed.



Wallowa County Chieftain, File

Enterprise veterinarian Randy Greenshields examines the dogs of Utah musher Dee Ogden during the 2011 Eagle Cap Extreme Sled Dog Race vet check on Main Street in Joseph. Vet checks for this year's race will take place Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022, in Enterprise and Joseph.

"If they're too skinny or too fat, we don't want them running," Greenshields said.

The doctor said that if a dog — or a team — doesn't pass the check, the vets can make the call to disqualify them. He said disqualification is rare.

"We have the power to do that, but we usually talk to the mushers and urge them to get the proper care for their dogs and they're usually willing to do so," Greenshields said. "It just goes to show how much these mushers care for their dogs and want what's best for them."

Dogs and mushers

The primary breeds that run as sled dogs include Alaskan husky mixes, Siberian huskies and Malamutes, although others do compete. Pulling a sled in a race over a snowpacked trail comes as second nature to them, Greenshields said.

"They've got a lot of natural instincts for pulling," he said. "They've been bred for years for this."

Greenshields said there were 22 teams signed up as of Jan. 12. That means more than 200 dogs that run in teams of six to 12. He said the longer the race they compete in, the more dogs in a team.

He emphasized that sled dogs are like family members to the mushers.

"There's a lot goes into preparing these dogs, feeding and training to where they can run these races," he said.

The races

The races start and finish at Ferguson Ridge Ski Area east of Joseph. Start time is noon on Jan. 20.

The 200-mile race is considered a qualifier for the Iditarod and the Yukon Quest races, both 1,000-mile competitions in Alaska. There's also a 100-mile race. Additionally, there is a two-day 31-mile race, and a two-day 22-mile juniors' race for 14- to 17-year-olds.

"That's to get younger racers into it," Greenshields said.

Other than last year, when the

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event was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECX has been happening since 2005.

The vets

Greenshields said he started that year as a trail vet.

"It kind of molded me onto the board of directors," he said. "I've been the president the last 12 years."

He won't be alone tending to the dogs' needs.

"We've got a whole team of vets who come in for this," he said.

Randy's daughter, Brooke Greenshields, went to work at Double Arrow in June 2020 — the spring before the ECX was canceled. This will be her first year as a full-fledged veterinarian at the event, although she has helped as a volunteer while in high school and college, Randy said.

In addition to the two Greenshields, volunteers from outside the area come in to help.

The head veterinarian, Dr. Kathleen McGill, of Bend, is expected, as is Dr. Kimberly McCready, of Wilsonville. Both have served as veterinarians at the Iditarod and Yukon Quest.

"We're working on one or two others," Randy Greenshields said.

His partner at Double Arrow, Dr. Dave Schaefer, will largely hold down the fort at the clinic, but also will be available if needed.

Community connection

Greenshields admits that giving his professional time to the ECX takes away from his work at

the clinic.

"We're short veterinarians when we're out doing the race," he said. "We donate a lot to the community, and this is just one way we figure we're just giving back to the community. ... (Though) my partner might say otherwise. I'm out playing with dogs, and he's stuck holding down the fort."

But they both believe it's worthwhile.

"I think it's important to be involved in the community to bring cool experiences and community events," Greenshields said. "We have well over 100 volunteers to help out with race. It's a great experience to work with so many diverse people."

Those volunteers include regulars who come out for every ECX, as well as youths in high school and FFA.

Greenshields urges people to come out to see the dogs at the vet checks and to watch the race. The mushers' progress can be monitored at Race Central at the Cloverleaf Hall or online on the ECX website, www.eaglecapextreme.com.

He said the race start is particularly fun.

"It's real pandemonium. Dogs are so excited, jumping around and barking," he said. "It's pretty wild. These dogs love their job."

Bill Bradshaw is a reporter for the Wallowa County Chieftain. Have a business tip? Contact him at 541-398-5503 or bbradshaw@wallowa.com.



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CLUES ACROSS

1. Give kudos at a poetry slam
5. German sausage, informally
9. Outfit that clashes?
14. Prefix for "pilot"
15. Sole
16. Ross of the Supremes
17. Web address starter
18. *Like swords with two sharp sides
20. "Who ___ kidding?"
21. Be in debt
22. Play before the headlining band
23. Any "Golden Girls" episode, now
25. "Care for a bite?"
29. *Spy on the inside
32. Texter's chuckle
33. Paddled down a river
34. There are two in a double pike
36. Dating site named after the Roman god of love
39. Drop, like an album
41. Less than 90 degrees
42. Earhart known as "Lady Lindy"
44. Dry ___ (barbecue seasoning)
45. *Betray
49. Comedic bit involving a sprayed beverage
52. No secret
53. Conversation in Slack
54. "___ Miserables"
56. Craps cube
57. *DNA shape
61. Skiing area near Salt Lake City
62. "Me, Myself & ___" (Jim Carrey film)
63. It might unfold into a bed
64. "What the ___!"
65. Duties
66. "The Hill We Climb," e.g.
67. Like a used firepit

CLUES DOWN

1. Largest hot desert in the world

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13	
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17					18					19					
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23			24					25	26				27	28	
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44							45						46	47	48
49				50	51										
				53										56	
57	58							59	60					61	
62								63						64	
65								66							67

2. Spice in many fall beverages
3. Apparel
4. "___ Goes the Weasel"
5. Played a harmonica
6. Took the subway
7. Director Lee
8. Shirt that might be fired from a cannon
9. Highly capable
10. Amusement park attractions
11. Mississippi state flower
12. Washington's bill
13. "Totally tubular!"
19. "___ worry about it!"
21. Recorded
24. Not abridged
25. Tiny
26. Guitarist Segovia
27. Shaggy hairdos
28. "Did anyone ___ hear that?"
30. Singer DiFranco
31. Close temporarily, like a theater
34. Movies
35. Gain knowledge
36. Gondoliers' needs
37. Single-serving coffee product
38. Partitioned-off work spaces
40. People in Chicago look up to them
43. "The Simpsons" bartender
45. Pope's religion: Abbr.
46. Lots and lots
47. Word after "light" or "Nintendo"
48. Sly
50. Use your noggin
51. Payments that might be e-filed
54. Term length for a Supreme Court justice
55. Big test
57. No. 1 song
58. Obama ___
59. Clairvoyant's skill
60. British throne?
61. "It just clicked!"

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