

Share The Trail

**New Hampshire Mushers Association
Reminds You To Share The Trail!**

**Promoting Safe and Enjoyable Experiences
For All on Trails Throughout New Hampshire**

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www.nhmushersassociation.org



What to Expect When You Meet a Team on the Trail

You may encounter teams with anywhere from one to twenty dogs on the trail. Such teams may be pulling a sled

or skier through the snow - or a wheeled cart, car chassis, or ATV when there is no snow. Generally, dog teams are configured as a line of dogs in pairs, with the driver (called the musher) riding behind.

Keep in mind that a team of dogs may be moving very fast and is incredibly strong. Driving a dog team is like water skiing - the length of the team may be dozens of feet long, and control of the tea sled depends on maintaining tension in the line. As with waterskiing, it takes quite a distance to turn or stop. However, sleds don't have steering wheels. The driver controls the team through



voice commands alone.

Of course, the dogs are the key to this sport, and it's useful to understand their behavior.

Experienced sled dogs

pretty much ignore all distractions and keep on running. However, younger or inexperienced dogs may be frightened by loud noises or be distracted by passers-by. And while mushers train their leaders to stay on the right

side of the trail, most dogs have a natural tendency to “cut the corner: when going around turns. None-the-less, it’s the mushers responsibility to keep his team safe on the right side of the trail.

Most trails are used by snowmobiles and ATVs as well as dog teams. Sled dogs are accustomed to motorized vehicles - and dog teams follow the same rules as snowmobiles. However, given the hilly and curvy nature of our trails in New England, riders of motorized vehicles may not see or hear an approaching team. Accidents can occur when snow-mobiles meet each other or dog teams, unexpectedly on the trail. **Riders and dog teams should be aware of each other on the trail and use caution when approaching or passing. Maintaining a safe speed is the key to everyone’s safety.**

Many snowmobilers enjoy stopping to admire or photograph dog teams. Above all, please don’t hesitate to talk to the musher when in doubt or just to be neighborly.



Many trails are also shared by hunters, cross-country skiers, hikers, equestrians and others. All trail users



should be aware of snowmobiles and each other as well as dog teams on the trail. And if you bring your own dog alone, please be particularly cautious. All trail users, including mushers, are responsible for controlling their own animals to avoid accidents. Safety is everyone's job in New Hampshire.

What Mushers Do to Promote Safety

Safety Guidelines For Mushers

Winter trails in New England are used by many and as such, all users have the right to expect safe use of these trails. You should expect to meet nearly anyone and anything on the trails. Your presence should not present a safety issue to anyone. These guidelines were adopted in a joint effort of mushers and the state of New Hampshire.

Dogs - Dogs should be up to date with their immunizations. You are totally responsible for the conduct, safety and well being of your dogs.

Equipment - Make sure your equipment is in sound working order and you are able to stop and remain stopped on the trails.

Control - Never take more dogs than you can safely control! Trained dogs and proper equipment are the key to successful control. You are responsible for the behavior and control of your dogs.

Visibility - Being seen gives others the opportunity to be alert to your presence on the trails. It does not mean they have an obligation to give any special right of way. They may as a courtesy, but are not required to do so. The responsibility for being under control and in the right place on the trail still falls on the musher.

Reflective Material and Lights - The brighter the better. Reflective jackets (or vests) are best. A headlamp and some sort of light on your lead dogs should be considered the absolute minimum requirement for safe operation during darkness.

Trail Usage - The safest possible way to run dogs on trails is to have an “escort vehicle” (snowmobile, ATV). Though not always possible, it is the safest. **KEEP TO THE RIGHT!** Rules of the road indicate that users should keep to the right. You must train your dogs to run on the bright hand side of the trails!

DOG MUSHING

The Dogs

Everyone pictures the handsome Siberian Husky pulling a sled, and many Siberians do just that. They are often seen on the trail pulling sleds both for racing and recreational mushers. Traditional northern breeds such as Malamutes and Samoyeds are also common on the trail. But you may be surprised to learn that people “mush” other breeds of dogs as well including Setters, Dalmatians, Labrador Retrievers and even Border Collies. Perhaps the most common dog seen today at races is the Alaskan Husky, a mixed breed dog that is bred specifically for racing. The only absolute requirement for a sled dog is that it is athletic, in good physical condition and has a love of running.



If you attend a sled dog race or happen to encounter a dog sled team on the trail, the first thing you'll notice is that the dogs absolutely love what they are doing. You

can see them at races leaping in the air and barking as they impatiently wait their turn. Or you may see them on the trail moving swiftly and silently through snow.

Sled dogs love to run!