

3/11/06

Dear Students,

It's great to be able to answer some of your questions. I am glad that you are following the race so closely. It looks like we are going to have a great race this year. I am planning to take the girls out to the checkpoints at Ruby and Galena today so I will be able to give you some first hand impressions on my next update. Here are answers to some of the question I have received:

**How do you keep yourself and the dogs warm?**

*The important part is to dress in layers and we eat lots of calories. Also covering your head with a balaclava and a really warm hat reduces your heat loss substantially and keeps your entire body warmer. The dogs are Arctic breeds that have a double layer of fur. The inner seasonal coat is called the downy undercoat. It is a dense insulating barrier and is very delicate and protected by the outer fur called the guard hairs. This along with cozy beds of straw that they sleep on out on the trail and added blankets that we cover them with while sleeping keep them nice and toasty.*

**Did you have to give your dogs away(when you got diagnosed with Leukemia)? If you did, did you give them to another person in the Iditarod?**

*No, I didn't give dogs away, but I did loan them to different mushers to race. A few are in Sonny Lindners team, but many have been run in mid-distance races including the Jr. Iditarod. The rest are being well taken care of by our live in handler.*

**How do you take care of the dog's paws on the race?**

*Mushers spend a lot of time making sure their dogs feet are in good shape. The dogs wear cloth booties a lot of the time during the race to protect them from the snow which can be abrasive over a thousand miles. On the trail mushers change the booties whenever they get a hole worn in them or they get wet- this is a big job if you have 16 dogs x 4 feet per dog!! At checkpoints mushers take the booties off of the dogs and rub ointment into the dog's pads.*

I have enjoyed reading your questions. Keep checking back for answers to more questions.

Happy trails!

Susan

more answers will be posted tomorrow