

February 15, 2011

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary of Homeland Security

Dear Madam Secretary:

On behalf of PETA and our more than 2 million members and supporters, I'm writing to urge you to withdraw the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) sponsorship of the 2011 Iditarod. Using taxpayer dollars to support the abuse and cruelty of the Iditarod, which many taxpayers oppose, is an obvious misappropriation of funds and, given the current economic climate, sends the wrong message to the public about how the U.S. government spends their money.

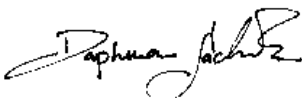
The Iditarod is marked by cruelty, injuries, and death. Dogs die *every year* in the more than 1,150-mile race, often because of hypothermia, gastric ulcers, and "sled dog myopathy"—literally being run to death. Last year, a 5-year-old dog named Lava died of gastric ulcers during the Junior Iditarod, a 150-mile race that's open to teens aged 14–17. In 2009, six dogs died during the grueling race, two may have frozen to death in the punishing weather, two died with fluid in their lungs, one died during a turbulent plane ride after the “musher” gave up, and the cause of death for the remaining dog is not known. Nearly 150 dogs have died in the Iditarod since records started being kept (a tally that doesn't include dogs who die in training or after the race ends). On average, more than half the dogs who start the race don't make it across the finish line, and 81 percent of those who do finish have lung damage, according to a report published in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*.

The dogs who survive must run about 125 miles per day, often racing as many as six hours at a time, with just a few hours' sleep each day. The race can take nine to 14 days to finish. The dogs' feet become bruised and bloodied, cut by ice, and worn out from the tremendous stretch of ground that they cover. Many pull muscles, incur stress fractures, or become sick with intestinal viruses.

The TSA is in a unique position to show the world that subjecting dogs to biting winds, blinding snowstorms, pulled muscles, stress fractures, dehydration, bleeding stomach ulcers, and the high risk of death is unacceptable. In the face of the controversy and negative public opinion that surrounds the Iditarod, numerous corporations have withdrawn their support and canceled their sponsorships.

We would love to tell our members that the TSA has ended their sponsorship with the Iditarod. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Daphna Nachminovitch
Vice President
Cruelty Investigations Department



PETA

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

501 FRONT ST.
NORFOLK, VA 23510
757-622-PETA
757-622-0457 (FAX)

PETA.org
Info@peta.org

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