



PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

April 9, 2019

Chas St. George
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Iditarod Trail Committee

Via e-mail: chas.stgeorge@iditarod.com

Dear Mr. St. George:

Based on the findings of a [PETA investigation](#) into two kennels owned and operated by former champion Iditarod mushers, I'm writing to request that the Iditarod Trail Committee take enforcement action in light of clear violations of the 2019 Kennel Standards Agreement.

At Team Baker Kennel in Kotzebue, the eyewitness documented that Iditarod champion John Baker and musher Katherine Keith, who I'm sure you're aware registered for the 2019 race before withdrawing, failed to care for severely injured dogs who were in obvious and significant pain. Many other dogs' only respite from the elements was dilapidated, uninsulated, and/or open-faced boxes, some of which had collapsed, containing very little, if any, straw for bedding. One elderly, arthritic, lame dog was kept continuously chained by the frozen sea without any shelter whatsoever until PETA's eyewitness constructed one for her. Dogs were routinely fed a "stew" of rotten and/or moldy meat that had been frozen and thawed. Their only access to water was what they could derive from this "stew," which at times was so foul that they did not eat it. Many dogs' ribs and hips were easily discernible—even beneath their thick fur.

At Ididaride Sled Dog Tours, Inc., near Sterling, which is owned by three-time Iditarod champion Mitch Seavey and managed by musher Ryan Santiago, both 2019 Iditarod contestants, the eyewitness found that a dog suffering from open and infected wounds and/or rotting flesh on his neck was denied veterinary care. Dogs had run in circles around the uninsulated plastic barrels to which they were chained for so long that their paw pads were worn down or raw. You can learn more about our findings at PETA.org.

The 2019 Iditarod Trail Committee Kennel Standards Agreement—to which these kennels were bound to abide—stipulates that "[n]o dog is forced to live under pain or distress without veterinary intervention for relief from pain/suffering," that "[d]ogs are offered a diet which is complete and wholesome," and that "[e]very dog has full access to a shelter adequate for the conditions."¹

We hope to hear from you that the Iditarod Trail Committee will take swift action in behalf of dogs condemned to suffer at these kennels. Further, we urge

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¹Iditarod Trail Committee, 2019 ITC Kennel Standards Agreement, June 8, 2018 <https://d3r6t1k4mqz5i.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2019-Kennel-standards-agreement.pdf?x81645> (last accessed on April 8, 2019).

the committee to drop its expectation that mushers will truthfully "self-certify" their compliance with the standards, which does nothing to ensure that similar cruelty is not occurring right now at dozens of other Iditarod mushers' kennels.

I can be reached at ColinH@peta.org. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colin Henstock". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Colin Henstock
Investigations Specialist
Cruelty Investigations Department