



April 6, 2022

Rod Hochman
President and CEO
Providence Health & Services

Dear Mr. Hochman:

This year's Iditarod explicitly highlighted that the race prioritizes competition—even at the expense of the dogs. During the race, many dogs were left outside to endure [potentially fatal storms](#). Three mushers, saying they feared the dogs would die, chose to protect their dogs from “winds so strong, they whipped up whiteout conditions” and brought them inside shelter cabins. What did the Iditarod do? It demoted two mushers who acted to save their dogs' lives in their race standing, and fined them all.

One musher who sheltered her dogs said that “there was no doubt to me that my dogs' sitting unprotected in these conditions could lead to death.” An Iditarod race marshal acknowledged that the mushers “did the right thing for their dogs ... but it also affected the competition for racers going forward.” PETA is calling for cruelty charges to be filed against the mushers who left their dogs outside while they took shelter. It's high time that Providence took a stand and stopped condoning this highly disturbing event.

Cruelty to dogs defined this year's Iditarod race from start to finish:

- Nearly 250 dogs were pulled off the trail due to exhaustion, illness, injury, or other causes.
- During the race, Iditarod winner [Brent Sass](#) shared a [disturbing video](#) of dogs in the blistering wind with—as he described—their faces “totally entrenched in snow” and their eyes “frozen shut.” Sass has a [record](#) of pushing dogs so far beyond their breaking point that he had to call for a rescue himself, and his dogs have died in other races. This year, he left behind three dogs who could go no farther.
- Musher [Hugh Neff](#) reportedly had to quit after the dogs he was forcing to race—who were described as “skinny” and apparently suffering from diarrhea—were found in such poor condition that they couldn't continue. Neff was banned from the 2019 race after one of his dogs [died](#) during the Yukon Quest.
- Leon, a dog used by rookie musher Sébastien Dos Santos Borges, went missing at the Ruby checkpoint during the Iditarod. [Apparently, Leon has still not been found](#)—and the Iditarod has done little to help find him.
- Before the race even began, four dogs were severely injured by a moose while being forced to train by rookie musher Bridgett Watkins. The month before, a team of dogs run by musher Jaye Foucher was hit by a truck—killing one of them, injuring others, and causing another dog to go missing.

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- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

Suffering, illness, and death are standard in the Iditarod. As someone with deep roots in Alaska—I was born and raised in Ketchikan— I implore you to take the money that you give to the Iditarod and use it to support an organization that truly serves our fellow Alaskans. Please let us know that you will no longer support this cruelty. Our members and supporters are eager to hear where you stand. I can be reached at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Shields". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Dr. Laura Shields
Manager of Corporate Responsibility