



2008 Yukon Quest Trail Conditions: Two Weeks to Race Start

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WHITEHORSE, YT & FAIRBANKS, AK – Recent snowfalls and frigid temperatures in Alaska and the Yukon bode well for race trail conditions as the 2008 Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race fast approaches.

On February 9, 24 teams are set to start the 25th Running of the Yukon Quest from Fairbanks to Whitehorse and Race organizers, officials and volunteer trail breakers are keeping a watchful eye on all 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometres) of the historic arctic trail.

“Our priority is to secure the best, most up-to-date information about every mile of the trail so we can give guidance to the mushers and make educated decisions to ensure the safety of the drivers and the dogs,” said 2008 Yukon Quest Race Marshal Doug Grilliot.

Intensive trail breaking, packing and marking has been underway since last December on both the U.S. and Canadian sides of the border.

Last week, Race organizers sent a pre-race trail “proofing” expedition to evaluate Eagle Summit and will again inspect conditions on the trail between the official Race Checkpoints of Chena Hot Springs and Central in the days immediately preceding the race.

“Eagle Summit has some snow on the ascent, however, the saddle where the trail goes through is windswept and only holding minimal snow,” said Grilliot. “We will closely monitor conditions there, and all along the trail, and make appropriate adjustments if necessary.”

In 2006, a fierce blizzard and whiteout conditions stranded six mushers on Eagle Summit before they – and all the dog teams on the summit – were airlifted to safety.

Additional safety precautions are also in place for this year’s race. For the first time the Yukon Quest has installed anchor points at the top of Eagle Summit to hold the dog teams – providing mushers with the option to ‘roughlock’.

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Roughlocking is similar in principle to chains on a vehicle and consists of wrapping a rope or length of chain around a sled's runner to increase friction and help slow and control the sled on variable terrain.

Over 5,000 reflective markers identify the Yukon Quest race trail between Fairbanks and Whitehorse. Painted bright orange and black, with reflective tape, they can be seen by mushers against snow, in flat light and in the darkness by headlamp.

On the Yukon side of the border, the Canadian Rangers break and maintain the race trail.

They report the Canadian side of the trail to be completely marked and ready for the racers with a good to excellent snow base and minimal overflow from rivers and streams.

A second pre-race trail report will be made available next week and during the race, volunteers will break trail ahead of the leading teams from Fairbanks to Dawson City to provide live updates to race headquarters from each checkpoint.

For more trail conditions and further information about the 2008 Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race, please visit www.yukonquest.com.

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