

Great North Woods Sled Dog Challenge
2026 Official Stage Race Rules

I. CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

1. Drivers:

- a. Each driver agrees to hold the Race Giving Organization (RGO), race sponsor(s), landowners, snowmobile clubs and other contributors harmless from any claim or demand based on any alleged action or inaction by the driver, his dogs, agents, or others acting in his/her behalf. The driver also agrees to release the RGO, sponsors, snowmobile clubs, contributors and volunteers from any claim or demand resulting from injury to the driver, his/her dogs, or his/her property.
- b. Further, the RGO has the unqualified and unrestricted authority to authorize the race sponsor(s) and or any RGO affiliated individual(s) or organization(s) to photograph and otherwise collect information about the race and all participants therein and to use such photographs and information for advertising, public relations or other publicity purposes. Before participating in the race, each driver must agree to the foregoing by signing all documents required by the RGO. Documents may be signed at the time of registration. A musher must be at least 10 years old. Mushers under the age of 18 must have written consent from parent or guardian. Receipt of the entry fee and completed entry/profile form will confirm that the musher intends to enter the race and agrees to comply with all race rules.
- c. The RGO will provide each driver with an official bib, which displays his/her start number. Bibs must be worn throughout the race.
- d. Upon approval by the Race Marshal, substitution of qualified drivers may be made until one hour before the start of the race. The driver starting the race shall drive the team throughout the race.

2. Dogs:

- a. All dogs must be available for physical examinations before the start of the race. No drugs or other artificial means may be used to drive a dog beyond its natural ability. Before the start of the race, the Chief Veterinarian must be notified of any dog receiving any prescribed medications. Any dog that has previously received prohibited medication(s) will be evaluated by the Chief Veterinarian to determine if the dog is eligible to compete, based on drug half-life and withdrawal times. Any dog receiving a prohibited medication or any injection will be removed from the race and the team will be disqualified. The following drugs are permitted (All other drugs are prohibited):
 - Topical medications (except DMSO)
 - De-wormers
 - Antibiotics (except procaine penicillin)
 - Anti-diarrheals (accept those with salicylates, e.g., Pepto-Bismol)
 - Estrus suppressants, such as Ovaban or Cheque Drops without analgesic or stimulative properties
 - Oral food supplements such as Glycoflex, Cosequin etc. with solely nutritive properties
- b. All dogs entered in the races shall have had DHLPP vaccinations within the 3 years previous to the race, but at least 21 days before the race day. Owners who vaccinate their own dogs must provide purchase receipts or documentation of vaccinations for each dog. Validated Rabies certificates must be presented to prove that Rabies vaccinations are current. Both Rabies certificates and proof of DHLPP vaccinations will be presented at the pre-race Veterinary check.

At the pre- race veterinary examination, any dog, which, in the opinion of the Chief Veterinarian, should not run the race, shall not run the race. If the Chief Veterinarian believes that a dog has a contagious illness, then the dog must be removed from the area, and the Race Marshal may also reject the entire team for the safety of the other teams. In addition, if the Chief Veterinarian believes that a dog is too vicious to be examined safely, then that dog shall be rejected. Only the Chief Veterinarian, acting in agreement with the Race Marshal, can force the dropping of a dog during the race. All dogs will be marked the morning of the race as to their fitness for racing. A Veterinarian will be on hand in case needed. Drivers are expected to pay any Veterinary expenses they might incur during the race.

3. Entry Fees & Refunds:

a. Current 2025-2026 NCM members will receive a \$30 discount from the entry fees listed below. Non-members will be automatically enrolled in the North Country Mushers for the 2025-2026 Season (11/1/2025 - 10/31/2026).

In the event that the race needs to be cancelled, all entry fees will be refunded minus the \$30 membership fee. In the event that the race needs to be shortened to a 2-day race due to weather or trail conditions, mushers will be refunded one-third of the entry fee.

FEES

A \$35.00 fee will be charged for any bad checks.

All out of country mushers must send money orders or certified checks or use Paypal.

II. RACE PERSONNEL

1. The Race Marshall shall resolve disputes among drivers and interpret the race rules in regard to infractions and penalties. He/She shall also have the authority to establish rules to cover special or unforeseen situations. The Race Marshal will have ultimate authority in all other disputes from the start of the race to the finish. Race judges may act as deputies of the Race Marshal.

III. TRAIL PROCEDURES

1. Race Course:

Race Class Entry Fee Withdrawal

10 DOG \$220.00 (US) Withdrawal from race prior to
Weds. March 4th will get full refund of
entry fee. Withdrawal on or after
Thurs March 5th receives no refund.

6 DOG \$190.00 (US) Withdrawal from race prior to
Weds. March 4th will get full refund of
entry fee. Withdrawal on or after
Thurs March 5th receives no refund.

a. Trails will be broken, groomed and marked before the races, and trails will be broken again on the morning of the races. However, due to weather, there is no guarantee of broken trails during the races.

b. The race course may be re-routed by the RGO as conditions require. All teams must follow the trail as marked or as redirected by the trail officials. Except within one mile of the finish line, an overtaken driver and team must relinquish the trail at the request of the overtaking driver. The overtaken team must move to the side of the trail as far as possible and slow down or stop until the overtaking team has completely passed. Except within one mile of

the finish line, the passed team must remain behind for at least 5 minutes before demanding the trail, unless both mushers agree. Drivers resting, snacking, or untangling dogs must clear the trail of their dogs and gear, making passage safe for other teams. Any wood fires (which are for emergency only) must be built a minimum of 15 feet off the trail. Drivers who litter the trail with food or other items shall be subject to disqualification and/or censure.

c. In the event of poor trail conditions at one location but good trail conditions at other locations, we will attempt to run one location more than once to make up the 3 day event. In the event that one leg of the race must be cancelled entirely, the race will be held as a 2-day event and mushers will receive a partial discount of entry fees.

2. Outside Assistance:

a. The spirit of this race is for the drivers to be self-sufficient. A driver will not be penalized for helping another driver whose life is endangered or for helping to recover a lost team. No assistance which would result in a competitive advantage may be solicited or accepted. Drivers may not accept assistance from any type of motorized vehicle, except to recover a lost team. Therefore, drivers should not help each other except to ensure safety and animal welfare. Drivers are encouraged to solicit or accept any available help recovering a lost team. However, if the Race Marshal determines that a musher has thereby gained a competitive advantage then the Marshal may impose an appropriate time penalty. Pacing with snowmobiles is prohibited.

b. A handler is anyone who helps a team. Handlers may help their driver and team before the team starts and after the team finishes each day. If personal handlers assist the team in any way while on the trail, the team shall be penalized or disqualified at the discretion of the race marshal.

Mushers may request help from the trail crew or spectators at intersections or road crossings if help is needed, but may not receive this help from personal handlers.

3. Sportsmanship:

a. Each competitor should remember to be courteous, helpful and honorable. Rude and/or inappropriate behavior by drivers or handlers may result in a penalty. Disqualification shall result if a driver or his/her handler tampers with another drivers' dogs, food or gear.

b. Any driver who uses ski poles must stop poling and place the poles in or on the sled whenever his/her team is within 100 feet of another team or whenever an approaching driver calls "Poles" or "Trail". Failure to do so may result in a time penalty.

4. Treatment of Dogs:

a. Whips of any kind or the use of brush, branches or any object as a whip or to create a frightening noise is expressly prohibited. Cruel or inhumane treatment of dogs will result in the immediate expulsion of the driver from this race, and driver will be banned from participating in any future North Country Musher races. The RGO, Race Marshal or judges in consultation with a veterinarian will have absolute determination regarding the cruel or inhumane treatment of dogs.

b. Any dog that expires for any reason during the race shall be completely covered in a sled bag and delivered as soon as possible to a race official. The Chief Veterinarian will examine the body to determine the cause of death. If needed, a full necropsy may be performed at the driver's expense. Death of a dog may result in disqualification of the driver.

5. Teams Tied Together:

a. Two or more teams may not be tied together in any way, except to assist a driver in trouble.

The drivers of any teams so involved must notify race officials as soon as possible.

6. Loose Dogs and Lost Teams:

a. There will be no loose dogs. All dogs will be either on the towline or in the sled. Dogs hauled in the sled must be hauled in a protected, humane manner. A driver must make immediate efforts to secure a dog which becomes loose. A lost team will not be disqualified if the driver regains control, provided that the entire race course is covered by both team and driver. A driver may accept help from another driver in recovering his/her team without penalty.

7. Switching Dogs:

a. Dogs shall not be switched between teams after they have officially left the starting line.

8. Dropped Dogs:

a. Dogs may only be dropped at the start or finish each day, unless otherwise noted at the drivers meeting by the Race Marshall. If a driver returns to the start to drop a dog, the number of dogs remaining in the team must still equal or exceed the minimum required at the race start.

b. The Chief Veterinarian and Race Marshall reserve the right to pull a dog from a team at any time. Any dog pulled by a veterinarian from the race will be identified, marked and not allowed to re-enter the race on another day until such a time that the dog is re-certified by the Chief Veterinarian. Re-certification of dogs must be requested at least two hours prior to the mushers designated start time.

9. Withdrawal from a Race:

a. To quit the race a driver must notify a race official. Any driver who quits the race without properly notifying a race official may be barred from future races. Exception may be made if a driver leaves the trail to protect the health or life of a dog or person, but a race official must be notified as soon as possible.

10. Driver's Report and Rule Violations and Safety Problems:

a. It is the duty of each driver to report trail safety problems and violations of these race rules. Official report forms may be obtained from the RGO. Reports shall include the time, date, nature of the rule violation or safety problem, approximate location on the trail, name or bib number of the violator (if known), and names of witnesses (if any). Such reports must be presented to the Race Marshal or Race Judge at the nearest location. The Race Judge will gather information and relay it to the Race Marshal for action. Protests and reports of rule violations shall not be discussed with any other persons, including spectators or media. Only the Race Marshal may issue statements to the media regarding protests and violations. Complaints will be kept on file and reviewed by the RGO. If the evidence indicates a pattern of unsportsmanlike behavior, the RGO may censure a driver.

IV. RACE PROCEDURES

1. Musher's Meeting & Vaccination Records

a. Mushers are required to attend the Online Mushers' Meeting on Thursday evening, March 5th at 8PM. The link to this meeting will be sent to all registered mushers 24-48 hours prior to the meeting. The Race Marshall may waive the rule if a musher is delayed due to unforeseen circumstances.

b. All vaccination records for entered dogs will need to be submitted to the RGO prior to the Mushers Meeting on March 5th. A form will be provided to registered mushers along with

instructions on submitting records.

2. Race Start

- a. The official start date is Friday March 6, 2025 at the Pittsburg Ridge Runners Clubhouse in Pittsburg, New Hampshire. Teams are required to be at the staging areas at least 1.5 hours in advance to each stage's starting time each morning to allow for verification of gear by race officials.
- b. The Race will be held as scheduled regardless of weather conditions. The Race Marshall may change the starting times and places as well as each succeeding stage due to bad weather and/or trail conditions.
- c. The starting order of the first stage will be determined by a drawing. The drawing will take place during the pre-race mushers meeting. The drawing order is determined by the signup order.
- d. The finishing order of each stage of the race after Stage 1 will be the starting order of the next stage.
- e. The 10 Dog class will be sent out onto the trail first each day, followed by the 6 Dog class with a 10 minute break between classes.

3. Stages and Checkpoints

- a. The distance between each start and arrival is considered a stage. The start and arrival locations are considered checkpoints. Mushers may be requested to personally sign in upon arrival at a checkpoint and may have their mandatory gear checked upon any Race Official's request at any time.

4. Starting Procedures

- a. Teams will leave the starting line at two (2) minute intervals. Any driver who cannot leave as scheduled will be rotated to the end of the starting lineup for his or her class. In the event that a driver misses their scheduled starting time the driver's recorded start time shall begin at their originally scheduled start time, unless the delay is determined to be the fault of the race organization or its personnel. Drivers should be prepared to start as scheduled to avoid lost time.

5. Mandatory Gear

- a. Drivers shall wear their identifying bibs throughout the race.
- b. All dogs shall be harnessed in single or double file. All harnesses shall be padded around the neck and chest areas. Reflective tape is required on the harnesses.
- c. Ganglines may be cable, cable core, or any synthetic or natural material, but chains are not allowed. If cable ganglines are used, the driver must have cable cutters easily accessible.
- d. At least 4 booties per dog are required at the start of each stage.
- e. A sled capable of accommodating injured or fatigued dogs as well as the required food, materials and equipment. The sled shall be equipped with an adequate brake, brushbow, snowhook, snubline and reflective tape.
- f. A bag capable of safely carrying an injured dog and, if necessary, covering an expired dog. Any expired dog shall be completely covered.
- g. Knife kept easily accessible
- h. Adequate first aid kit.
- i. Fire starting equipment (lighter or waterproof matches).
- j. Working headlamp.

Gear will be checked at the finish of each stage. Missing equipment will result in a time penalty.

6. Number of Dogs & Dog Pool

- a. 10-Dog Class: A musher may start each stage of the race with at least 8 dogs and no more than 10 dogs on the gangline. No dogs will be allowed in the basket at the start of each stage. Dogs will be chosen from a maximum pool of 14 dogs.
- b. 6-Dog Class: A musher may start each stage of the race with at least 4 dogs and no more than 6 dogs on the gangline. No dogs will be allowed in the basket at the start of each stage. Dogs will be chosen from a maximum pool of 8 dogs.
- c. No dog may be added to a team once a stage has started. The maximum number of dogs allowed on the team may be reduced to accommodate trail conditions at the discretion of the Race Marshall.
- d. Each dog in the pool shall be marked by the Race Veterinarian or Race Officials at the pre-race Vet Checks. Only dogs from the musher's approved and marked pool may be chosen to use in stages.

7. Finish

- a. An official finish is determined by the nose of the first dog to cross the finish line. If a loose team crosses the finish line ahead of its musher, the team shall have finished when the musher crosses the finish line.

8. Awards

The awards ceremony will be held the afternoon of Sunday March 8, 2026, approximately one hour after all teams have finished the race.