

March 18, 2005

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2 pages via fax (513-627-1587) and U.S. mail

Dear Barbara:

As you know, Iams' Eukanuba brand sponsors mushers from "Team Norway" in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. This cruel event is widely condemned because it forces dogs to mush a grueling trek of more than 1,000 miles over unforgiving Alaskan terrain, usually in less than 14 days. Countless dogs, including those mushed by "Team Norway," are killed or injured.

During the 2004 race, Eukanuba-sponsored Kjetil Backen of "Team Norway" pushed his dogs beyond the point of exhaustion. Takk, Backen's lead dog, "just sat down and died" a mile from the checkpoint, according to race marshal Mark Nordman. According to Al Townshend, head veterinarian at the Unalakleet checkpoint, "Sudden death can occur in dogs for a number of reasons ... including accidental trauma, ulcer or a dog inhaling [his or her] own vomit."¹

Backen also dropped one of his dogs, named Blue, at the appropriately dubbed "Cripple Checkpoint" when she displayed symptoms of tendonitis, resulting from the strenuous schedule of being mushed day after day.

In this year's Iditarod, Eukanuba-sponsored Robert Sorlie of "Team Norway," who surrendered two dogs at Eagle Island checkpoint, "one with a sore leg and another [who] 'psyched out,' or didn't want to run any more."² Sorlie crossed the finish line with only eight dogs, "having dropped eight sick, sore, or tired dogs at checkpoints along the route."³

Make no mistake about it—Eukanuba's sponsorship of "Team Norway" directly connects Iams to the deaths and injuries of these dogs and puts the company at fundamental odds with the humane majority who feel that the Iditarod is a cruel and outdated relic that needs to end.

Despite the barrage of consumer complaints regarding Iams' involvement in the Iditarod, Iams stubbornly refuses to withdraw support from "Team Norway," with the

¹ <http://www.adn.com/2004/iditarod/news/story/4853448p-4790078c.html>

² <http://www.armstrongmywire.com/sports/read.php?id=13028404&ps=995,994&cat=&cps=>

³ <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7175398/>



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bizarre rationalization that it suddenly has a new-found respect for “regional and cultural differences” regarding how dogs are treated. This, of course, is absurd. Cruelty to animals knows no boundaries, and neither should humane objections to it. The bottom line is that cruelty is cruelty, no matter where or by whom it is practiced.

As a self-proclaimed “leader in animal welfare,” Iams cannot ignore the cruelty inherent in this endurance race. Two members of Iams’ own Animal Care Advisory Board, the HSUS and the ASPCA, have position statements firmly against the Iditarod, condemning it as “inhumane.”⁴

Iams stated publicly that it officially stopped sponsoring the overall Iditarod event in 1994. Iams should now admit that it has been misleading the public about its continued involvement in the race and act responsibly by dissolving *all* ties with the Iditarod (including the mushers) once and for all. To do anything less simply exposes Iams’ misguided priorities: valuing its brand marketing over the health and well-being of dogs.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shalin D. Gala", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and includes a vertical red line on the right side.

Shalin Gala, Research Associate
Research & Investigations Department

cc: Mary Beth Sweetland

⁴ Please see enclosure for the ASPCA’s position statement against the Iditarod. To read why the HSUS is opposed to the Iditarod, visit http://www.hsus.org/pets/issues_affecting_our_pets/facts_about_the_iditarod.html.