

## President's Letter

As I am typing this, snow is falling outside the window. Straw for the dog houses is stacked neatly in the garage and the freezer is overflowing with meat and fat to help the dogs through the coldest part of winter and the hardest part of training. Sleek summer coats are becoming fuzzy and we all are beginning to vanish under layers of polar fleece. Race schedules are being pored over and plans organized for the season. As with all of us, hopes and dreams are working overtime as I look forward to the season ahead.

My hopes and dreams for MUSH with PRIDE as I begin my term as President are also high. I think we have an enthusiastic and diverse Board of Directors that is going to keep the organization moving forward on the positive trail that last year's Board got us headed along.

I hope that as each of you hook up dogs this season; you will be hooking up and running with PRIDE. PRIDE's mission and message becomes more and more important in today's world wide political climate. We need to let folks know that the welfare and care of our canine companions is well thought out and carefully attended to. Displaying your MUSH with PRIDE patches, bumper stickers, and talking about the organization whenever we can will go a long way towards that.

Wishing you all a very Happy Holidays and many happy trails this winter!

Karen Ramstead  
President  
Mush with PRIDE

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## Mad Moose Mitigation Musings with Mitch Michaud

Moose, Moose, just chanting this word causes sled dogs to pick up their pace, ears point up and noses move back and forth looking for the location of this massive four footed creature.

The relationship between moose and dogs (or canines) goes back thousands of years. Their respected histories are intertwined and both animals have adapted to each other and their environments. Moose are found circumpolar, the same places as sled dogs and their ancestors, the wolf. Wolves and moose are poised together in a predator, prey relationship that keeps both species healthy but not necessarily at high population levels. Despite the ins and outs of modern day game management politics and policies moose and sled dogs encounters are unavoidable. Having lived with moose in my back yard for my entire life, seeing the "Eastern Moose" growing up and now the much larger Alaskan version (there are 4 variety of moose in North America), I thought I knew all there was to know about moose. But being relatively new to dog mushing, I quickly found moose doing things I had never seen before. As for the dogs behavior, the reactions to the moose is almost completely predictable, chase, attack, and runaway, and for those who have been there before, just run away.

After seeing a moose repeatedly running and crashing into the fencing around the dog kennel, trying to attack the dogs and my wife, I wondered why a moose would do this. The dogs were tied to posts for feeding, the dog yard was surrounded by a 6 foot fence, and the dogs were clearly in no position to give the moose chase or cause it harm. I have heard many stories of stomped dog houses lying flat as the dogs avoided the thrashing feet of a killer moose and I have seen my dog team about to be stomped on by an agitated moose. Compare this to my walking up to the same moose with no dogs, I could throw sticks, rocks, snowballs, firecrackers and even dog poop and the moose will barely move away. There is definitely something unique to this dog and moose relationship.

I researched literature on moose behavior and discovered that how moose react to dogs is completely normal when you look at the thousands of years both moose and canines have adapted to each other. Moose in general have developed behavioral reactions to dogs that are instinctive and not dependant on the actual situation at hand.

Most of the materials I have read were developed from research from a Polish biologist by the name of Valerius Geist, and from a book titled *Ecology and Management of the North American Moose*, edited by Franzmann and Schwartz. According to Geist, the attacking behavior I observed in my dog yard is very typical. Moose are unlike all other ungulates, which will run away when threatened by dogs. Moose will take an offensive posture when confronted with canines and actually choose to attack. Moose over many years have become adept at attacking wolves and actually overcoming most attacks. Moose instinctively will not wait for an organized pack to make its move. It has a much better chance attacking individual animals and small packs before the wolves become organized. This relates very well to what I have heard and seen concerning moose attacks involving immature moose (1-3 years old). These unprovoked attacks and yard stomping almost always involved young immature moose, who haven't learned about sled dogs yet. This doesn't mean to say than an old bull moose won't pull out the instinct card and start stomping, but it does explain why those young animals are most often involved in moose dog encounters. On the other hand, I have seen moose walk next to a dog house, browse on a birch tree, all time the dogs

Moose, cont.

stays in the house shaking. I once had a moose run through the dog team while on a 4-wheeler run. The moose appeared out of nowhere, and was on the team just as I was able to stop. In seconds the moose was up to the wheel dogs and I had to leap off the wheeler. From the ground I saw a moose hit the ATV and flip over. The moose went down on all fours and scrambled off the road into the forest and was gone into the dark. I quickly started up the line checking the dogs for injuries and by the time I got to the lead dog a second moose, a calf, ran besides the team. As I stood up, the large female that ran through the team was coming in for a second attempt. The moose chased us for a brief while and I remember looking at the speedometer as it passed 25 mph. I was giving the dogs a chance for a free run putting as much room between the moose and the dog team without over running them myself. I estimate that the moose broke away at thirty miles per hour. This cow was running on instinct, blinded by the 4 wheeler light, and once the calf was safe the instinct of attack took over.

But what happens on the mushing trail? According to Geist, moose when confronted with danger will not flee into unknown areas. They instinctively know that deep snow gives the predator an advantage and that the way they came or the way they are headed gives them a much better chance of survival. Add a moose calf to the mixture and you add to the complexity of the situation. Moose when attacked by wolves will not run blindly into unknown areas. They will either run back the way they came or move on in their original direction of travel until they feel the threat decrease. Older moose, experienced with dogs, will often step off the trail and wait for you to go by. I had the experience of meeting a moose on a trail which offered no easy means of escape and the result was a moose and dog team standoff. This ended peacefully with no injuries with only two lead dogs greatly traumatized by stomping front feet. Eventually the moose turned tail and ran down the trail. As the "man on the sled", my options were very limited, no gun, difficulty in holding the team in place and even my voice couldn't be heard over the other team dog's barks and attempts at getting that moose. What I did right was give a chance for the moose to see its avenue of escape. If I had been able to hold the team I might have run toward the moose, flanking it and escalating the threat. Just like a wolf pack would have done. Attack and flank; and heading right into the rear quarters, which are very flexible in the direction of kicks, similar to a horse.

Another survival trait of the moose is actually unnoticed by either the musher or the dogs. Often times the musher will see a moose on the trail well before the dogs ever notice it. Sometimes moose prints will be right on the trail, the moose on the opposite hill and the dogs are totally oblivious. Mushers have been known to say that the dogs are so much into their run that they haven't noticed the scent of the moose yet. In reality, moose are ungulates and all animals in this grouping have developed a scent that is almost unnoticeable to most dogs. Certain dog breeds have been bred for just the opposite trait, like Elk Hounds but most dog breeds have no noses for moose. Time has made the moose almost totally undetectable by smell to wolves and their close relative the "husky". This inability to smell a moose was seen in Iditarod 2004. A number of mushers experienced driving their dogs over a moose carcass and the dogs not even noticing the large brown snow covered bump on the trail. Moose on the other hand have one of the greatest noses and sense of smell in the northern forest. Moose have great hearing far better than dogs but do have relatively poor eye site. They are nearsighted but have excellent night vision. Often when a moose goes off the trail the dogs will quickly go by leaving the musher with a clear view of the moose and the dogs never even noticing where it jumped off the trail.

Moose, cont.

In the world and life of a moose size does matter. Canadian researchers have seen full grown moose back away from people who approach them with manufactured antlers that are larger than their own. This was demonstrated on day at my kennel when I approached a young bull that was charging my kennel fence. I had seen on CBC Television, a biologist approach a bull moose with a 2 x 4 on her head as an experiment in width being more important than overall size. I decided to try the same thing. As I was out approaching this young bull yearling, my wife asked if she should call 911 before or after the moose was through stomping me into the ground. This young bull immediately sized up the eight footer I had and ran off. Previous attempts using rocks, dog poop, and firecrackers had little effect with this same yearling.

Moose are known killers of wolves, next to man; moose are the second largest killer of wolves. The front feet of moose are known as being very adept at inflicting harm but it is the rear feet that deliver lethal blows to wolves. Moose have been observed killing large wolves as they make their final stand cornered by wolves. Dead wolves are often found with broken backs and crushed body cavities in the wild. Moose are best avoided on the trail and in the dog yard at all cost. I have witnessed the death blow delivered by a moose as it tried to thump another moose out of its territory with its rear legs. The impact on the other moose was horrific; the moose actually was picked up and thrown on the ground. The kick is swift and fast and usually preceded by a cocking action before it is delivered.

Knowing moose behavior should make us better dog mushers and avoid dog and musher injuries. The first rule is avoidance. Avoid running your dogs directly into a moose, look out on the trail and give the moose a wide berth. Use the moose's excellent hearing to let him know you're on the way. Shout, whistle, wave your arms, focus a head lamp on and off the moose, keeping in mind the moose has large ears and excellent night vision. If you can get your dogs to bark and howl as you wait for the moose to clear off the trail do so. Give the moose a chance to run before it feels threatened. Avoid moose encounters where the moose has little room to flee. Early season mushing with little snow actually favors a moose over wolves but deep snow is the last place a moose will flee into. Early season mushing is also when moose are difficult to see since their hide and hair do not reflect light and little snow cover lets moose hide easily. If you encounter a moose on the trail, secure the dogs and the sled. Remember the lead dogs are getting the immediate threat and that other dogs in the team may see this as an instinctive dinner occasion. Remember size counts for a moose not height and weight but width. Think wide, shout at the moose with your arms extended and use your gloves to widen the stance. Don't confront the moose from the side since he may think you're doing a flanking move on him which is what wolves would do to him in the final attack. What you don't want to have happen is to move the moose to the middle of the dog team. At this point the moose will attack the dogs or you because its instincts tell it you are about to organize your attack. If the moose is surrounded by dogs, and you're coming in from the side; this is when the most aggressive behavior will be exhibited. What should you do? Stay with your dogs and try to pull the ones closest to the moose away and keep them together and give the moose a chance to flee. Watch for those front hooves since they can do a lot of damage to the dogs and yourself and don't approach the moose from its back side. One swift kick is all it takes to make a headline.

Mechanical means such as firecrackers have worked for some but I have not had much luck with them. I have tried car horns, and pushing the moose out using a pickup truck but on the trail there

Moose, cont.

are few options. You can carry a gun to protect yourself and your dogs. Biologists have used items like rubber shells for shot guns and "cracker shells", large whirling noise makers that are akin to a loud short range flare to scare nuisance moose. Flare guns also have a good effect and have been used for more than just driving moose off and some mushers have told me that canned air horns are also effective.

Most moose encounters in dog yards occur in the winter when food is scarce and the best browse not eaten in the summer was left near your dog yard or kennel. Around your kennel there are a number of actions you can take to lessen its attractiveness to moose. Make sure straw is not loose around the yard. This includes straw in the dog poop pile. Remove this potential food source from the moose. Moose have been known to eat kibble, so practice the same procedures to reduce bear encounters to also discourage the moose. Keep favorable winter browse, such as birch, and willow cut back and below snow depth and away from the dog kennel. In yard that is fenced, maintain a top rail of plastic pipe or 2x4 limber. In a trial in my dog yard, I placed a white PVC pipe on top of the fencing and this greatly decreased the amount of charging the fence was experiencing. On the one side that did not have the pipe the moose continued charging the pen. I suspect that the moose could not see the wire mesh but did easily see the cross members. Geist has suggested the moose have better horizontal visual acuity than vertical. This explains why moose rarely get trapped by fallen trees. So make yourself wide by waving out stretched arms with chopper mitts tied to your sleeves.

If all else fails, try sporting a 2 by 4 on your head. It will do much to give you courage and amuse your family, friends and neighbors but don't do try this during mating season.

~ MM

### **International PRIDE Ad-Hoc Committee Formed**

Mush with PRIDE is pleased to announce the newly formed International PRIDE Ad-Hoc Committee tasked with looking into membership interests and concerns in other countries. We are currently looking for members interested in working on this Committee. If you would like to participate in this exciting new effort, please contact Karen at [info@mushwithpride.org](mailto:info@mushwithpride.org)!

**Don't forget to renew your Mush with PRIDE membership!  
Our membership year begins November 1.**

## 2008 Annual Meeting and Other Fall Activities

Mush with PRIDE held its annual membership meeting during the Northern New England Sled Dog Trade Show October 4<sup>th</sup>, in Contoocook, NH. Board Members Jane Fuerstenau and Ben Woodard were in attendance during the weekend. Mush with PRIDE was greeted with a warm New England cheer and the PRIDE booth was busy with lots of folks stopping by to say hello during the weekend.

Bob Anderson spoke about Mush with PRIDE during the Mid Union Sled Haulers (MUSH) fall membership meeting October 11-12. The meeting was well attended with people from other Michigan sled clubs as well as ISDRA. Bob will also be hosting a MUSH training session in early December and will do a hands-on review of the Equipment Guidelines with those who attend.

Past PRIDE President Mitch Michaud represented Mush with PRIDE at the Willow Dog Musers Association's first ever Sled Dog Mini-Symposium on September 6, which was a big success. Mitch also attended the Alaska Dog Musers Association Symposium in Fairbanks October 10-12 and hosted a Mush with PRIDE forum discussion on growing the sport, misperceptions, and dog care practices.

### **Mush with PRIDE has a new discussion group on Yahoo!**

Join in the discussions in our newly created Mush with PRIDE yahoo group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mushwithpride/> and follow the easy instructions to become a member (it is FREE!). For those of you using the old PRIDE list, it still works, but we are hoping to migrate over to the Yahoo site soon.

## Meet the PRIDE Board of Directors

This fall Mush with PRIDE members elected five Board of Directors, including three new faces (Whistler Bob, Jackie, and Swanny) will lend their energy and enthusiasm to the Board. Here is a brief rundown of the 2008-09 Board.

**Karen (The Prez) Ramstead** from Alberta, Canada is a long-distance musher who has numerous Iditarods and other races under her belt and a kennel of 70 Siberian Huskies. Karen will be serving PRIDE as President and will head up the Bylaws and Nominating Committee.

**Bob Fawcett (aka Whistler Bob)** is a new Board member who hails from (you guessed it) Whistler BC, Canada and has a tour operation with 300+ dogs. Whistler Bob will serve PRIDE as the Vice President and also help with the Website Committee.

**Jane (Git 'er' done) Fuerstenau** lives in Soldotna, AK with her husband, two kids, and 12 partially retired/recreational sled dogs. Jane is largely responsible for the resurgence of enthusiasm in the PRIDE Board and will continue to serve PRIDE as the Secretary/Business Manager and will help with the Nominating and Guidelines Committee.

**Bob Anderson (aka Michigan Bob)** is a continuing Board member from Michigan and has been running dogs since 1987. Michigan Bob will serve as Treasurer and be heading the Membership Committee this year.

**Jolene (Momma) Giese** from Laramie, WY is a professional pooper-scooper, mushing mom, and animal shelter assistant with a kennel of 7 dogs and one spoiled puppy. Jolene was reelected this year and will continue to serve PRIDE's Education Committee.

**Shawn (Sled Builder Guy) Linendoll** is a professional sled builder and kennel owner/mid-distance racer from Fort Ann, NY. Shawn will head up the Website Committee and help out with the Public Relations Committee.

**Thomas (Swanny) Swan** is a new Board member who lives in Two Rivers, AK and is a historical reinactor with special interests in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century freight mushing practices and dog behavior. Swanny will head up both the Education and Guidelines Committees.

**TC (Bad Dog) Wait** lives in Tiny Town, CO with 16 "recycled" sled dogs that she enjoys doing recreational mushing and mid-distance racing with. TC was reelected to the Board and will head up the Public Relations Committee.

**Jackie (Energizer Bunny) Wepruk** is a new Board member who lives in Alberta, Canada. When she is not helping her husband with their kennel of 19 dogs, she earns money as a farm animal welfare coordinator (to support the dog habit, of course). Jackie will serve on the Guidelines Committee.

**Ben (The Face) Woodard** lives in Norway, ME and has been involved with sled dogs for over 20 years and been in the outdoor industry for over 30 years as a ranger, guide, ski patroller, and manager of outdoor businesses. Ben will continue to serve PRIDE on the Membership Committee and is often found presenting PRIDE to various New England mushing groups.



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**Membership** \_\_\_\_\_  New \_\_\_\_\_  Renewal \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*\$15 individual, \$20 family, \$5 youth under 18, \$10 associate, \$100 business. Quarterly newsletter included for all memberships, a copy of Sled Dog Care Guidelines and Equipment Guidelines included with new memberships. PRIDE membership year starts October 1<sup>st</sup> (those received on or after June 1<sup>st</sup> are good through the following membership year). Don't forget membership for your local mushing club!*

**Sled Dog Care Guidelines** \_\_\_\_\_  Quantity \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Basic sled dog care and training advice from dozens of the most respected mushers. Includes information on dog yards, feeding and watering, training, husbandry, puppies and more. 36-page book \$5 each or \$3.50 each for 10 or more.*

**Equipment Safety Guidelines** \_\_\_\_\_  Quantity \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Based on a survey of experienced mushers, covers the basics of safe equipment choices and use. Includes chapters on dog gear, lines, sleds & rigs, skijoring, dog yards, traveling, etc. 36-page book \$5 each or \$3.50 each for 10 or more.*

**First Aid Manual** \_\_\_\_\_  Quantity \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*A guide for on-the-trail emergency care organized and compiled by Dr. Mark May with contribution from 6 veterinarians and 9 mushers copyrighted in 2003 by Mush with PRIDE. 51-page book \$5 each or \$3.50 each for 10 or more.*

**Mush with PRIDE Patch** \_\_\_\_\_  Quantity \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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