

# QUESTIONS WITH A CHAMPION:

## *Buddy Streeper discusses weight, feeding, and "secret" supplements*

There has been an interesting divergent regarding race weight in the last few years of racing. Buddy's team and a few others carries a bit extra weight into races, whereas, some people will trim their teams down (especially if they expect warm temperatures). At North American this year, I noticed that teams were skinnier than they had been in last few years, similar to early 2000s and before. Here is Buddy's response:

### ***Buddy Streeper on why his dogs carry more weight going into races:***

We learned the benefit of carrying more weight when we started going to Stage Stop and longer races, not to take anything away from Rondo or North American - those are hard races. When doing multiple day races that are long distances at decent speeds, you have to take in more reserves and more water weight. If anything happens to them, they go off their food a bit.

We noticed the benefit big time because we have power, energy, and longevity from the fat reserves. The only time I think that carrying extra weight is a detriment is on cold, fast trails. I'm talking 25-30C below zero on a trail that is hard and fast as possible. River ice fast.

This isn't actually due to injury, as you might think because the trails are hard. Picture Usain Bolt trying to run the 100 M in 9.5 seconds with ankle weights on. You know, the oxygen intake, the cold weather, they are feeling good, the muscles are responding correctly. The dogs can run really fast because you don't have to worry about overheating.

At top speeds, that's when you need to be a little bit slimmer. So this would be extreme sprint: 8-14 miles in the 21-23 mph range. So even in most limited class scenarios, the dog has a better attitude and can perform better when carrying more weight. Of course there is a fine line, you don't want them to be obese, you want them in shape, athletic.

Anything longer than that one exception, there is no benefit. As far as scenarios go, I'm talking 1000:1 benefit to having the dogs heavier. A race like Wyoming (Stage Stop) where trails are slow and temperatures are warm, I don't think there is any benefit to having your dog a bit underweight in any circumstance.

So it is overwhelmingly the case that people take their dogs to races too skinny. I see this all over the world: Quebec, Europe, Western Canada, Stage Stop, Alaska. All of my competition used to do it, and some of my competition have seen that we are carrying more weight to races.

We have vet checks at Stage Stop and it is like going to a weigh-in at a heavy weight boxing match, you get to look the opponent in the eye, see their best dogs because they only have the 16 they are racing with at the vet check. Some of the dogs 5-6 years ago were too skinny. What

I am seeing now, is some of the competition has changed this, like Jeff Conn, who has improved drastically or JR Anderson and Bruce Magnusson and they are knocking on the door for second and third.

There is all this discussion on Facebook and Sleddog Central chat forums about how to keep dogs from getting too thin. Nobody does what we do, by traveling all over the world doing what we do. Never have I pulled out of a bigger race, and that is probably because we carry better weight. So when we are on the road for several months racing, the stress of traveling and catching bugs isn't as bad because of the reserves.

Another benefit to the dogs carrying extra weight, is they don't get stressed from being too thin and get runny poops. During our runs, at the 9 mile or 10 mile mark, you can go on the trail and scoop them up as they would be in the dog yard - nice and firm. And that is a result of a quality diet.

### ***Weight management during the year:***

Ideally, I don't want to fluctuate my dogs from race weight at any point during the year. We run all year long and there is only a two week period in the spring when there is a thaw where they get a break. After that, they are loose running on our trails around our property. Other than that, my dogs never sit idle for more than three days. I'm not talking turning them loose in a pen for 35 minutes. We are free running every third day at 5, 6 or 8 miles.

The only time they get a little thin, and this is not by choice, is November and December. I can't put enough calories in them. It is the coldest part of the year and temperatures plummet and we are training longer and farther. Their metabolism is changing too, their full winter coat isn't in yet, and they aren't metabolizing their food the way should either.

Believe me, I try to keep their weight as even as I possibly can. I've talked to several long distance mushers - King, Burmeister, etc. and at the same time, we are fighting the same problem. We can't get enough calories in them, regardless of what is going on. By no means are they skinny, they are a little bit shy of what I consider ideal.

### Feeding regime:

Our feeding regime is pretty standard. Summer is different than winter. In the summer we feed in the morning. We exercise around 7-8-830 am and wait an hour to 90 minutes after exercise to feed. So 10 am. Then we top off their bowls with water. (This switch happens April 15th because I can offer free standing water.)

Once the temperatures drop in the fall and I can't keep the water thawed, I switch my feeding to the evening. I do a water broth in the morning, at around 8 am. A soup broth again at 4 pm and feed immediately after.

We will fluctuate a little bit. In Wyoming, we race early, around 9 am. So I will water a little earlier, between 7 and 8 am. Then we feed a few hours after the run.

When I was sprint racing, at the breakneck speeds, I was rigid about feeding 18-20 hours ahead of time. Now, my dogs can poop on the fly and the loose dropping allows the dogs to have good bowel movements.

#### April 15th - October 15th

7 am: free run  
10 am: feed then top off bowls

#### October 15th - April 15th

*\*slight variation during races*  
8 am: baited water  
10 am: train  
4 pm: baited water  
4:30 pm: immediately following baited water, feed.

### Buddy's feeding tips:

**Soaked kibble vs. dry:** Feed a dry kibble. I don't mind a light soak, but never feed a mush. You should add it to the food and the water right upon feeding. Some people soak their food over night and feed it the next day. I really think that breaks it down, allows bacteria to grow, and that is not the way dry kibble is designed to be fed. If you talk to the top vet nutritionists in the sport like Arleigh Reynolds or Joe Wakshlag, they tell you to feed it fresh. A very light soak of 4 or 5 minutes is okay.

**Temperature:** We feed cold usually. My first scoop is warm water, and the second scoop is below room temperature at 10-12C. So I let the meat thaw just enough to mix it and I will toss the frozen part at the center of the pail to the side and let it thaw as I stir up the rest of the food. I am pretty careful about how I mix and process my food because

I don't want it to sit out too long.

**Genesis:** I have been using this product for four years now and I honestly consider it a secret - it's that good. Not many people use it and if I were going to look at ways to improve my kennel, I would use this. It is a product called Genesis from Ten Squared racing. It allows the dogs to metabolize and process their food better. It is not a probiotic, or colostrum, it is different.

The last few years, I have started to add this powder-formed supplement around October 1st. What I saw last year, is I didn't see any extreme weight changes in the dogs because they metabolize their food better.

I've started telling people about this and the reviews coming back are great. It is kind of expensive at \$150 per gallon, which will feed a 20 dog kennel for a couple of months. Though, you will see better stools, dogs carry better weight, and they have a better appetite. So the price is reasonable considering the benefit you are getting.

### Ideal weight? Here's how to check:

Buddy was sure to mention that each bloodline and style of dog will carry weight differently than others (even within the same kennel). Generally, pointer crosses have more muscling and shorter coats. The pointer muscling will create the "round back end"

as Buddy mentions below, whereas a husky generally will not be able to carry the muscle to create a round back end. Also, when Buddy mentions the ribs on the side profile of his dogs, this is far more difficult, or impossible to use as an indication of weight with thicker coated dogs. Make sure to put your hands on those dogs as Buddy describes below.

### How Buddy identifies proper weight of his dogs:

#### Viewing dog from above:

The dogs should have an hourglass figure, where the body follows the contour of the ribs and pinches into the hip bones on the side and pops back out. My dogs carry a straighter line because of the weight they carry.

#### Viewing dog from the side profile:

A big indent on the last rib (the rib closest to the hind legs) while seeing the second, third or even fourth rib would be too skinny for us. So you would want to barely see the first rib.

#### Observing weight by touch:

I find the weight of a dog by feeling between the hip bones themselves. Then I check along their spine. At the back end, where the hip bones are, mine carry a round back end. It is important to note that each of my dog carries weight a bit different.

Hi! My name is Drover. My mom has written ten books about my exciting adventures as her seizure alert service dog. Isn't that cool? We've gone on trips to places such as Disneyland, South America, and Alaska. I've also solved mysteries and helped my mom paint; I can't wait to become friends! (And I always love it if you can bring a treat too.) ☺

**Drover the Service Dog, Children's Series**  
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