

VT MUSHES

NEWSLETTER

Let's Get Gwenn to

Nome

Fund raiser, kennel tour and social

Page 3

Flea and Tick Control

A no chemical solution for controlling pests

Page 3

Product Review

LL Bean Climashield HL Zero Degree Sleeping Bag

Page 5

Remembering a Run

February 27, 2011 Danby-Mt. Tabor Road

Page 6

cover photo by: iSkiVermont.net

BRAEBURN SIBERIANS: HOW DID WE COME TO BE OWNED BY 35 SIBERIAN HUSKIES?!

When I was 19, I began a 15 year love affair with a golden retriever, Sean. Everyone told me a puppy was a poor idea because I was young; however we were inseparable as we grew up and grew older together, sharing adventures and a friendship that knew no bounds. He taught me the wisdom and power of unconditional love, forgiveness, and living in the present, all incredibly important lessons that changed my approach to life in profound ways.

My daughter Elizabeth had no choice but to grow up with dogs! She combined her love of dogs and nature by taking our golden retrievers on long walks, often hooked up to a wagon in the summer or a sled in the winter. When she was 9, she expressed an interest in learning how to dog sled. Elizabeth undertook a mentorship at a kennel to see just how interested she was. I will never forget the expression on her face the first time she drove her own team; she was in heaven!

So we took the plunge and adopted two 8 year old, expert lead dogs, Pickett and Spyder, to train us. My husband, Alex, built a wheeled rig, we all built a kennel, I mowed trails through the fields on our property, and our learning curve about dog sledding began. I read Ann Cook's Running North about racing the Yukon Quest. Fascinated, I initiated an e-mail conversation with Ann. A short time later Elizabeth and I were having tea with her and her husband, George Cook, at their home. That meeting with experienced mushers was nothing

short of inspirational. The following week we attended a dry land rig race put on by the New England Sled Dog Club with an eye to just watching and learning, but once there, Elizabeth wanted to race. She did so, and earned a blue ribbon! Within the month, 8 year old Jet, a leader, 4 year old Alexandra, a team dog, and up and coming 15 month old Taka



Annual Meeting

September 20th Friday at 6pm at Great River Outfitters in Windsor, VT. Potluck - Come earlier, if desired, to check out Great River Outfitters!



Featured Speakers

*Aily Zirkle and Allen Moore
October 5th and 6th
Hopkinton Fairgrounds
Contoocook, NH*

VT MUSHES



joined our family! Little did I know that it would be a life changing event extending way beyond a mother's desire to support her daughter's interest.

The first season was dedicated to Elizabeth who loved, trained, raced and took care of our first 5 dogs. She did so the second season as well, but by then I had decided that I wanted in on the fun - and so Alec (Alexandra's brother!), Rain, Hera and Fen joined our family! Then Elizabeth suggested that I run the final race of the season, a two day event, 15 miles each day, as my 51st birthday present. With Hera and Alec as my trusty and experienced leaders, we not only finished the race very respectably, we finished it by working together; the ultimate example of teamwork. It was an incredible rush for me at intellectual, emotional and spiritual levels, and those two days are in the top ten of my life's memory book.



Our second season also saw the arrival of our first litter, by Alexandra. With this event, we named our kennel; "brae" and "burn" for our Scottish heritage, and after the Braeburn checkpoint in the Yukon Quest. Elizabeth and I continued to be a mushing mother-daughter duo for a third season, racing, sharing adventures on the trail, and training Alexandra's children: Jasper, Ace, Blaze and Asia. And by the end of that third season, dog #14, eight week old Skye!

Elizabeth entered high school and opted out of full-time mushing and kennel

management. I seriously evaluated where this was all going; "this" now being a full blown passion! I now knew what I wanted, but decisions had to be made about how to balance a kennel with the other parts of my life: mother to two teenage daughters,



full-time educational consultant, and, oh yes, being a spouse! Downsizing or eliminating the kennel by placing the dogs was not an option for me due to my philosophy that the dogs give us unconditional love and we return that to them. Therefore they were members of our family and deserved our respect and unconditional support and a forever home. To be honest, this was a difficult transition, and I include this aspect of our history as a cautionary tale because owning and maintaining a kennel with high standards, while rewarding, is also a lot of very hard work 365 days a year. It also taps the resources of time and money, both of which affect the spousal partnership and family life. It must work for everyone in order for it to work well. We reached compromises that felt right emotionally and pragmatically.

We had a second litter with Taka as the mother, adding Deimos, Phoebe and Ariel to the Braeburn Team (dogs 15 to 17). In addition, Skye, who must have read my mind about having him as a sire, fathered two unplanned litters! Three of the resulting puppies joined our family. Twenty and counting! I continued to race and to mush for the pure joy of it. During

this time, I often remembered my decision to take on a golden retriever puppy 34 years earlier, grateful that I had followed my heart in the face of pragmatic "obstacles".

In our sixth year, a pivotal event took place. My husband Alex mushed his own team for the first time, thus moving from the essential role of helpmate with all things, to a musher. The dogs worked their magic on him and soon we were discussing the dogs at the dinner table as much as anything else. Life was moving on and very busy, and yet Alex and I had found a new depth and phase in that journey called marriage.

That sixth year of Braeburn Siberians was also a transition year in another way. Our teams will never be the fastest or most synchronized teams, but our teams are definitely energized, fun-loving, hardworking, well-trained, dedicated and in love with their life! Because of my philosophy, and in spite of the fact that I loved the hard work and thrill of racing, I opted out of competition, deciding to focus instead on sharing the dogs and the riches that they offer with others. My professional passion is working with students, teachers and schools on the subjects of literacy and dyslexia. Alex's passion is growing healthy food as a vegetable farmer. My teaching experience and Alex's free winters dovetailed well with running a dogsledding tour business.



We are just starting our 10th year of life with Siberian huskies, and our 4th

continued on page 4

VT MUSHES



“Let’s Get Gwenn to Nome”

Kennel Tour and Social

Gwenn Bogart, a well known and accomplished outdoors woman, originally of Manchester and Wells, Vermont, will enter a number of qualifying dog sled races during the 2013-2014 season. In March 2013, she completed The Sheep Mountain 200, her first qualifier, finishing in 4th place. Gwenn has set a goal to run the 2015 Iditarod as the first woman from Vermont to enter the more than 1,000-mile-long trek that takes place over some of the most remote and severe terrain on the planet.

Bogart, who has professional careers in horsemanship and fly fishing, co-founded Casting for Recovery (CFR) (www.castingforrecovery.org), a breast cancer support group headquartered in Manchester, Vermont, that uses fly fishing for mental and physical healing. Bogart will be raising awareness and support for CFR during her qualifying races as well as the Iditarod. Bogart also has a private pilot’s license and flew a Cessna 150 from the Green Mountains to the Last Frontier in

2011. Gwenn currently lives in Wasilla, Alaska with her husband David, who is a member of the Iditarod Air Force.

For further information on Gwenn’s journey, her qualifying races and to follow her training and progress, go to Gwenn’s Mush Puppies Blog www.gwennsmushpuppies.blogspot.com/. You can donate to Gwenn’s endeavor online with a bank card at www.gofundme.com/journeytoiditarod2015#.

Members of the Vermont Mushers Association, Inc who gathered at Tsan Tsulan Siberians (kennel of Allan and Suzanne Tschorn) in Sandgate, VT to show their support of Gwenn Bogart’s Iditarod Dream are pictured below. Left to right – Jay Coffey, Jean Coffey, Gwenn Bogart, Allan Tschorn, Erin Kelley, Judy Gilmore, Suzanne Tschorn



Flea and Tick Control: No Chemicals by Elizabeth Strobridge

Keeping our dogs healthy through the summer not only means maintaining healthy weights, keeping them cool and entertained but also bug free. I am always looking for ways to keep our dogs happy but within a our low budget.

When I first got sled dogs I was putting Frontline on them every other month but as our pack increased I sought out other treatments that might be easier on the wallet. I researched a lot and found that the synthetic chemicals used in some of the skin drops can cause some serious side effects such as convulsions, nausea and respiratory issues that are meant for the pest but can also affect the host (your dog). We had one of our older dogs have a serious reaction and that put the end to adding chemicals.



I asked around and found that a lot of people were using Diatomaceous earth. Diatomaceous earth is basically fossilized algae that is crushed into fine powder. There are lots of ways to use it to keeps pests at bay since it mechanically kills pest by dehydrating them (by removing the waxy layer on their exoskeleton not by removing water). So I picked up a bag in the poultry section of the farm store and decided to use it in the dog kennel. We get the St. Gabriel’s Organic four pound bag and it usually lasts up a year or two. Each spring I clean out our kennels as soon as things start to thaw out and sprinkle the powder all over the bottom of the houses and around the fencing. I also use it around the house and in the dog crates in our basement.

It’s ok for the dog to roll in it, and can even be put in their food. We have used diatomaceous earth for about three years now without a problem.

The other thing we have done is add Brewers Yeast to their food. Each dog gets about a tablespoon added to their food once a day. It is said that it makes the skin taste bad to fleas. Some people add garlic as well but I did not want our dogs to be stinky so we just don’t

continued on page 4

VT MUSHES



continued from page 2

year offering educationally oriented rides, longer tours, and workshops for individuals and groups of all types – and yes, internships for children! We've had 4 more litters of puppies, adding Morgan, Juno, Beau, Misty, Cam, Amber, Cleo, Aster, Getta, Atlas, Kimmi, Kasey, Hope, Faith and Grace to the Braeburn family. This made founding dog Alexandra a great grandmother! Five other dogs have also made their way to us: Dahlia (Skye's sister), Coal (Alexandra's nephew), Anakin, Jinks, Kenzie (Hera's granddaughter) and our lovable rescue boy Kuff. Thirty-five dogs and counting?

It is an extraordinary amount of work to take care of 35 dogs and the infrastructure that supports them, and run the tour business. However, when something is a passion it

doesn't feel so much like work, but more as a gift. Yes, there are days when I arrive home from teaching depleted or when Alex comes in from the field bone weary, when it is raining, when the kennels need mucking, and when we would love a hot cup of tea with our feet up. But when we arrive at the kennels, the weather, the messy poop and our fatigue become irrelevant as we are greeted by unbridled enthusiasm and unconditional love. And as for mushing 13-14 dog teams on a winter day ... well, as fellow musher's know, there are no words that can fully describe the experience. Neither Alex nor I can imagine a day without our canine companions and the laughter and solace they give us each and every day.

~Story and photos by Kathy Bennett

continued from page 3

do that. There are lots of products out there that are dog specific, so they might have a higher cost. I have been buying Lewis Labs Brewers Yeast, the 32 oz can, which costs about \$32 and it lasts the entire bug season for about 8 dogs.

We also use a shedding comb on the dogs a few times a week. When they are out having play time I run it through their fur a few times (not a full grooming) just to keep out excess dirt and dead fur. It keeps them clean, bug free and gives me a chance to

look them over really quick. This has helped keep our pack healthy but if you have a lot of tall grass and tree cover checking for ticks should be done fairly often anyway.

Happy sled dogs in the summer mean healthy, strong dogs for the fall and winter.

If you, as a member, have articles and/or pictures you'd like to submit for future use, please send them to Judy Gilmore at ainnirbard@gmail.com.

Other Upcoming Events



September 8th
Shelburne Museum Goes to the Dogs



October 21st
October Newsletter



November 22nd
VTMA Meeting



December 21st
Winter Solstice Social



March 1st - 2nd - tentative
Burke Mountain Sled Dog Dash



April 1st
Dog Registrations Due!!



April 11th
VTMA Meeting



May 12th
May Newsletter

VT MUSHES



Pumpkin Dog Biscuits

- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup canned pumpkin
- 2 tablespoons dry milk
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt
- 2 1/2 cups brown rice flour *
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley (optional)

Preheat oven to 350.

In large bowl, whisk together eggs and pumpkin to smooth. Stir in dry milk, sea salt, and dried parsley. Add brown rice flour gradually, combining with spatula or hands to form a stiff, dry dough. Turn out onto lightly floured surface and if dough is still rough, briefly knead and press to combine.

Roll dough between 1/4 – 1/2" – depending on your dog's chew preferences, – and use biscuit or other shape cutter to punch shapes, gathering and re-rolling scraps as you go. Place shapes on cookie sheet, no greasing or paper necessary. If desired, press fork pattern on biscuits before baking, a quick up-and-down movement with fork, lightly pressing down halfway through dough. Bake 20 minutes. Remove from oven and carefully turn biscuits over, then bake additional 20 minutes. Allow to cool completely on rack before feeding to dog.

* Brown rice flour gives the biscuits crunch and promotes better dog digestion. Many dogs have touchy stomachs or allergies, and do not, like many people I know, tolerate wheat.

Makes up to 75 small (1") biscuits or 50 medium biscuits.



A Spoiled Dog

This is Suzie, a real up and coming Strobridge sled dog, enjoying some blanket time! She is a very motivated girl who loves pulling. Suzie has been to a couple of weight pulls and has done really well as a beginner.

Photo by Elizabeth Strobridge

Do you have a spoiled dog? If so, submit your picture of your spoiled dog(s) to: ainnirbard@gmail.com!



Gryphon, a lab/chow mix enjoying the snow with his owners Sheila and Duncan Goss.

Product Review: LL Bean Climashield HL Zero Degree Sleeping Bag

by Jean Coffey

The LL Bean zero degree sleeping bag kept me warm on my last winter camping adventure when the temps were down in the teens overnight. The climashield fill provides the same insulating properties as goose down with the added bonus of lofting even when wet. The mummy style bag has some nice features like a padded double hood. The woman's model bag has ample room for my large shoulders. I used it with a double layer of sleeping pads right on the snow with no problems. I threw a hand warmer in the bottom of the bag during the night when I found my feet had slid off the sleeping pad on the snow. Once the problem was corrected I quickly warmed back up. I slept in one light layer very comfortably. The bag weighs just shy of 4 pounds, packs well and can be machine-washed. I love the color. This bag was a clearance model so was very reasonably priced at \$79 at the LL Bean outlet. I am a big fan of LL Bean products as they have been reliable over the years.

VT MUSHES



Another Successful Kennel Social: October Siberians

Rob Farley of October Siberians hosted a northern Vermont kennel tour and social in Hinesburg on July 21st. This was in direct response to the Vermont Musers Association, Inc. desire to provide more social opportunities in our effort to build community with the mushers of Vermont. We applaud Rob's hospitality and enthusiasm.

If you are thinking of kennel tours, social events, training opportunities or fun runs, please consider inviting VTMA members along - when deemed appropriate.

A New Look to the VTMA Website!

The Communications Committee is hard at work revamping and updating the Vermont Musers Association, Inc. website! Erin Kelley has taken the lead and is working with Jacques Delyea.

Stay tuned for the announcement of when the new website will go live!



Remembering a Run from February 27, 2011 - Danby-Mt. Tabor Road

With the nasty weather prediction of impending rain for tomorrow, I figured Rohan, Turin and I should take advantage of the one foot plus snowfall from Friday's storm. After driving on plowed, but slippery roads to get to Erin's, I borrowed Ishmael and Hemi. The dogs and I headed off to the Danby-Mt. Tabor Road. The parking area was pretty quiet when I first pulled in and began setting up, but shortly after I arrived, so did a bunch of cross-country skiers. The skiers were very nice and commented how pretty the dogs looked as they skied by us. Some even snapped the boys' pictures.

We got off and were going along good till we reached the first intersection. I called Haw and Turin, per usual ignored me. In his defense, Haw was a trail that hadn't been broken recently and Gee had. I know that I should have stopped the team and set my hook and walked up to Turin and reinforced the whole "listen to me" and turned them Haw, but they were still full of vim and vigor and going Gee seemed easier than possibly losing the team.

The trail, which I hadn't been on before, kept going up a nice gentle incline. Turin was doing a really good job of being forward orientated and keeping everyone moving and pulling. We finally reached a wide turn-around area with three

snowmobiles parked there and LOTS of tracks going everywhere. But just beyond the turnaround area, there was another trail and the boys headed for it and we should be able to loop around to the main forest road and get back to the Jeep that way. Something different and I had just read in Lead, Follow, Or Get Out of the Way that looping was better than backtracking - so why not?

So we kept going. The scenery, while not being impressive vast views of the horizon was still pretty with the freshly snow covered evergreens of the area. Plus a trail covered in fresh snow and the quiet sounds of the sled over the snow and sled dogs doing what they were truly born to do - perfect.



We were going along fairly well when we broke over one hill and landed on a plowed road. Okay, so the VAST trail must join with civilization for a bit and then meander off again. No worries, we've got this covered, so up the road we went...till we intersected with another road and no signs for

where the snowmobiles are to go. Sorry boys, we aren't going to aimlessly wander around on plowed roads looking for some little black arrow, so Turin actually got us headed in the right direction after the snowplow went through and back on the trail we had just covered. And down the trail we went.

We made it back to the Jeep fairly quickly (it was mostly downhill). I got everyone and everything packed up and then back to Erin's house.

~Story and photo by Judy Gilmore