

VT MUSHES

NEWSLETTER

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cover photo by: iSkiVermont.net

ANAM CARA ON THE MOVE

In January of 2014 we explored a move to New Hampshire. New jobs, house hunting and leaving our home of 27 years was a lot to consider, however our 11 Siberians were first on our minds. How would we get them from point A to B safely and efficiently? Here is the story...

Once we committed to the move, our house hunting was powered by Google Earth. We only looked at houses with few neighbors and close trail access. My focus was finding the ideal spot for a kennel. In early March with lots of snow still on the ground we looked at six houses. As we drove around, the realtor remarked that I had to look inside the houses as well as in the outbuildings. The last house on the list turned out to be the ideal spot because of the proximity to the rail trail and enough property to buffer the kennel. The bonus was a 40x60 barn with an overhang out back. Both structures met our criteria so the process to move began in earnest when we arrived back in Vermont that night.

Creating To Do lists was the first course of action. Our kennel design would evolve in a two-phase manner. Phase One was to clear brush, clean out the debris in the barn overhang, close in a dilapidated garage door space and set up outside runs. Phase Two will be completed by early winter 2014, which would be the addition of inside runs. The outside runs would be new materials and we would use the current kennels for the inside runs in the future. This allowed us to leave the Vermont kennel intact until moving day and set up the New Hampshire kennel shortly after closing on the new house on May 1.

The barn needed work to get it ready for the dogs. On May 2, friends and family helped us clear out the scrap wood behind the barn, clear brush, take down and fill in the old garage door and create the decking for the kennels. A slight pitch of the deck toward the gates helps to drain all the liquids and a sandy base



Fall Camping Weekend with Bret Sass, Mike Ellis and Christine Richardson

A weekend, October 17 - 19, of training and talking dogs at Jericho State Park, Berlin, NH. Have experienced race veterans ride along with your own dog team and provide hands-on help. Take your training to the next level whether you need help with basic behavior training, pointers on managing a checkpoint, or simply want your team to run and train with others. Small or large teams, recreational, sprint and distance, all skill levels are encouraged to attend.

Maximum of 18 teams (30 people).

Call (603) 523-4818 or visit <http://sealcovejournays.com/events.html>.

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under the decking keeps it dry and reduces the urine odor. The first weekend was a marathon but the base of the decking was done by sunset on Sunday evening. The following weekend we finished the top decking and went to pick up the kennel panels 30 miles away. There was a glitch at the store, they lost six gates, so a few dogs would have to double up when they arrived on moving day. The perimeter fence was completed that week with a nice gate to assure there would be no escapes in the early days at the new place.

In addition to the construction there were many logistics to arrange. Thanks to a fellow New Hampshire musher we found a wonderful veterinarian. It turned out we needed that vet sooner than expected as one of the dogs had to have urgent surgery on a rapid growing nerve sheath tumor on moving day. Our dog food representative found us a place to purchase our food and it was waiting for us the week we moved. Our plan was coming together and we drove home from the New Hampshire house on the second weekend of May confident the dogs would make a smooth transition

Meanwhile back in Vermont, moving day May 15th, arrived and we had to keep the dogs safe while we took apart all the kennels. The dogs did well on the drop line and some were in the exercise yard. Boris

did make a late day escape from the exercise yard and sat at the perimeter fence gate looking worried as he watched his former home carried to the moving truck. Overall they seemed to tolerate the upheaval of their home for the past eight years.

Once the moving truck was packed, we headed to New Hampshire. The dog supplies (first aid kit, food, bowls, drop chains and leashes) were packed in the truck. The dogs were loaded in the boxes and we took off down Route 89 minus our lead dog, left behind at the vet for his surgery. We arrived at the house in the dark and were thankful the perimeter fence was up as we dropped and fed the dogs. They slept in the truck overnight and we crashed on the air mattress.

Up at 5am, we dropped all the dogs on the truck and proceeded to set up the kennels on the decking. We finished just in time for the movers to arrive and start unloading items in the barn. The first day at the kennel the dogs were very relaxed and seemed very happy. Jay snapped this photo as he finished the last few runs

(above). There were a few doubled up due to the missing gates and one fight did get ugly. Luckily, the next day, Jay found some gates in northern NH and drove over an hour each way to pick them up. The single runs had everyone happy in their own space.

The new set up is great because there are single panels between kennels so hair is effortlessly washed away. The wood decking is easy to keep clean and when I mop it drains well. The surface keeps dry because the urine drains out of the run area. The work area in the barn took a bit to set up but seems to be very functional. Once we clean up the remaining “stuff “ in the barn we can drive the truck inside to load the dogs and unload dog food.

Phew, this was a process and at times seemed overwhelming. Thanks to our dear friends Donna and Ray and our kids for all the help. The final product seems to be a pretty functional kennel space and the potential for much more mushing in the weeks and months to come. We will miss Vermont and our good friends in the VTMA but we can always meet you for a “fun run”. We are looking forward to spending time with our New Hampshire mushing friends out on the trail and I am sure we will all see each other in the fall at the Trade Fair.

Story and photos by Jean Coffey of Anam Cara



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Braeburn Siberian Models

Top photo: Aspen checking the floor to wall connection

Middle photo: Inside kennel chain link

Bottom Photo: Outside kennel chain link

Our next VTMA meeting, the annual meeting, will be in October - stay tuned for more

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.

Insight Based on Hindsight: Suggestions for Building or Improving a Sled Dog Kennel

How often do we get to improve on something with the benefit of that lovely and annoying thing called 20/20 hindsight? Not often! After 10 years of growing a team of Siberian huskies from 2 to 36, and growing a kennel to contain them, we have (to our dogs amazement) finally learned a thing or two! Of course there are still things we don't know we haven't learned, and we will probably still be plagued by the "Oh, if only we had ..." phenomenon, but our kennel is now a lot closer to that elusive goal of kennel perfection!

Now, I must forewarn you that this is a kennel designed with the Siberian husky in mind, and as anyone who owns Siberian huskies knows, that fact ups the challenge considerably because Houdini genes are part of the gene pool of the Siberian! Also, this article is about a kenneling system, not a tie out system.

20/20 Hindsight Must Haves to Minimize Repairs and Eliminate Dog Escapes

- 1) Containment fence: a minimum of 6' above where the dog can stand. The winter snow pack raises the kennel floor, and the tops of dog houses are typically about 30" tall. Therefore, total fence height must be a minimum of 8-10'.
- 2) Chain link fence: dogs can break the welds in welded wire and the 6x8 openings in calf panel are too big for a determined escape artist. Free standing chain link is a sturdy and durable choice, but is labor intensive with its prerequisite of bars and steel posts (or pressure treated 4x4s) set into concrete. It is also permanent and is therefore it's not easy to change the layout/size of the kennel. Chain link panels can be easily rearranged to accommodate changes in the number of kennel spaces needed, the size of those spaces, and the overall footprint.
- 3) Dig proof floor: pavers or patio blocks best choice, or concrete slab. To be the most effective, pavers or patio blocks must be laid on a sand base that has been compacted (preferably by a compacter), and must be snugged tightly together with perimeter edging to prevent them from spreading/loosening. Pavers are generally thicker and heavier and less likely to be flipped up by the dogs than patio blocks; urine will drain for either one. Concrete is hard on the joints and so heavy rubber stall mats must be laid down; concrete holds urine and therefore must be sloped. Bare ground *might* work if it is stony, ledgy, or *very* hard. Remember, this is for Siberians who can dig several feet down in no time at all! The

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containment fence for a dirt floor kennel must go at least 3' into the ground.

- 4) Fence-to-floor connection: *extremely* tight/solid; this is where a dog will focus its attention for escape options. Free standing chain-link requires a steel bar or pressure treated lumber on the outside of the lower edge (or must be set into concrete) because it is relatively floppy. Chain-link panels must be wired every 3" with steel wire (aluminum is too weak); also, the bottom perimeter bar on chain link panels rust out in 4-6 years due to the presence of urine (they are only made of thin wall steel); we have replaced them with pressure treated lumber with the chain link stapled to the inside so that the wood is on the outside to prevent chewing.
- 5) Doors: latches top and bottom are a must to avoid the door being twisted open; if not inherent to the latch, a safety in the form of a carabiniere or a chain; open *into* the kennel so

that it is self-closing if dogs jump against it.

- 6) Ante-chamber: all kennel doors should open into an ante-chamber so that there is a second line of defense against the dog that will inevitably slip by you.

20/20 Hindsight Super Nice Conveniences to Simplify the Life of the Humans

- 1) Raise door bottoms 12" and fill the opening with thresholds made of pressure treated wood. This minimizes shoveling out kennel doors, *and* eliminates frozen-to-the-floor doors in above/below freezing temperature swings.
- 2) Drainage: have a 1" opening below fences to allow for flushing out dog hair, bedding, leaves, etc. when hosing the kennel floor.
- 3) Water: a frost free hydrant close to the kennel to avoid frozen hoses and carrying buckets of water long distances in the winter; and to clean food bowls on the spot.

- 4) An exterior service door *without* a threshold for bringing wheelbarrows, snow blowers, etc., into the kennel; since there is no ante-chamber, this door is *not* meant to be used when dogs are in the kennel!
- 5) Ante-chamber: a full size gate so that a dog truck can enter the ante-chamber for secure loading (and for some dogs, self-loading!), and a gate directly into a play area.



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- 6) Kennel layout: one overall kennel facility that contains multiple pens, a feeding station, and a common ante-chamber. Multiple pens allows for flexible grouping. Some of the pens must be separated physically by more than a single fence because of intact males and in-heat females, and antagonistic dogs cannot be on opposite sides of the same fence.
- 7) Dog food storage: storage in or adjacent to the ante-chamber so that bags of kibble only have to be handled once between the time you unload them and the time you use them. If you buy by the pallet, this is meaningful!
- 8) Visibility from the house so that you can do at least superficial checks on the dogs from the

house; nice when it's below 0 or pouring rain!

20/20 Hindsight Super Nice Conveniences to Improve Dog Happiness

- 1) A play area, preferably with platform play structures, that is accessed directly from the antechamber. This allows the dogs to have:
 - a. a change of scene from their living quarters;
 - b. a place to indulge their interests, such as digging;
 - c. a way to really stretch their legs in a full out lope;
 - d. a way to socialize and play with dogs that they don't live with so that everybody remembers everybody!
- 2) A play area is also a fabulous tool for us people to integrate new dogs and puppies into the pack, to work on socialization skills in a controlled setting for dogs who need it, and to improve the relationship of antagonistic dogs. It's also a great way to hang out with your dogs, and not only watch them have a blast, but to learn about them when they are not working in harness, but just kicking back instead!

be different as the characteristics of each site will be different, as will the number of dogs, and the owner's personal preferences. There are probably as many kennel designs and features as there are mushers! We have simply shared our learning curve about what we consider to be essentials for dog safety and happiness, kennel longevity, and kennel efficiency, along with some "luxury" items for both people and dogs. Of course it is our dogs who have been our mentors in this process by flipping open a latch, catty-cornering up and over, digging down and out, etc.! All of us with sled dogs are always pursuing kennel perfection by adding this, deleting that, tweaking the other thing, and thinking, "Wow, if I won the lottery, I'd ...". We've been making improvements for 10 years, but now, even though we haven't won the lottery (maybe we should be buying tickets?), we're getting closer than ever to that goal! If you have ideas that are not mentioned here, or have comments on things we have mentioned, please share on the VTMA member's Facebook page. You could help someone save time and money, and even prevent the heart stopping and sometimes devastating event of an escaped dog. Happy kenneling!

Story and photos by Kathy Bennett and Alex MacLennan of Braeburn Siberians



Of course, every kennel design will

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Pumpkin Biscuits

Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup of canned pure pumpkin puree
- 2 tablespoons of dry milk powder
- 2 1/2 cups of flour (or substitute)
- 2 teaspoon of water - plus or minus

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

In a bowl, stir together the eggs, pumpkin, milk powder and flour. Add the 2 teaspoons of water, or enough so the dough just comes together.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough to 1/2" thick. Cut into shapes with 1" cookie cutters. Gather the scraps, combine and roll for more biscuits. Repeat until the dough is used.

Place the biscuits 1" apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes, then turn over and bake another 20 minutes or until hardened. Let cool on the sheet for 5 minutes.

**Fall is Here!**

The temps are dropping and the leaves beginning to change!

If you have any Fall training stories, let's hear them! Or hiking stories or even just Fall photos of adventures with your dog(s).

If so, submit to: ainnirbard@gmail.com!



Northern New England Sled Dog Trade Fair 2014

Dr. Arleigh Reynolds, a board certified veterinary nutritionist and world champion open class sprint race musher will be the keynote speaker. Dr. Reynolds is also a champion of the 2013 and 2014 Fur Rendezvous Open and Open North American.

The Trade Fair will be October 4th and 5th at the Hopkinton Fairgrounds in Contoocook, NH.

Come for a fun day or come for the whole weekend! Camping is available. There will be a BBQ and fun dog/musher contests Saturday night. There will be the annual rig race Sunday morning. Of course view the main barn for all the vendors!

Dogs are welcomed, but must be leashed.

For more information: <http://www.sleddogtradefair.org/> or (207) 695-3754.