



Zuma's
Paw Prints

OH WOW! This is a "MUST HAVE" for K-9's Like Me!

Friday, November 4, 2005

Hi Boys and Girls and all my K-9 friends,

It is 12° F (-11C) and partly cloudy here in Wasilla today. It is fine weather for those of us with furry coats. I don't understand why humans don't grow fine coats like we do. It would be much easier on them. The sunrise this morning was at 8:37 a.m., but it started getting light around 7:45. The sun will set at 4:45 p.m. this afternoon and it will be fully dark by 5:45. I think winter has finally arrived. There is no snow here yet, but Joe and Norma Delia, who live in Skwentna, say that they have almost a foot of snow on the ground and that the Skwentna River is in the process of freezing over, too.

Once the freeze up is complete, dog teams from all over the area of Wasilla, Big Lake, Willow, Trapper Creek and Talkeetna will begin doing training trips out to Skwentna. There, they will camp with the dogs and then return to their home dog lot. Joe and Norma are great hosts. They enjoy playing host to winter visitors and to our volunteers during the race and greet everyone who goes to Skwentna. Mac, their beagle, likes to help. Skwentna usually gets lots of snow during the winter, so you should see Mac tunnel through their yard. It reminds me of that movie that humans like so much called *Tremors*.

In September, we welcomed [FIRSTRAX](#) as a supporting sponsor of the race and I was excited when I saw what they had to offer to us dogs. They produce the first-ever inflatable doghouse, which offers unrivaled insulation and could become a must-have for even tough sled dogs. This is now the "Official Doghouse of the Iditarod". How cool is that? With one of these, we dogs can take our own doghouse along when traveling. No more spending the night in guest doghouses or in barns or sheds. It only takes about five minutes using a foot pump to inflate the house and set it up, too. I think even I could do that with my paws! Ah, the luxury of it all!



My good buddy Denali agreed to help me show off the Yukon model doghouse while I snapped pictures with my digital camera. The one that Denali is showing you is the Yukon medium size that will house a dog up to 75 pounds. There is a large size for dogs up to 110 pounds and the extra-large for dogs up to 175 pounds.



This is a side view of the doghouse. Notice that Denali is inching toward the inside. I think she thinks this is "her" new home!

All of the Yukon houses come equipped with a removable plastic door for those really cold nights, too, and an insulated foam floor to keep the cold in the ground from creeping up and disturbing a dog's sleep. Ahh, I can feel myself relaxing just think of snoozing in one of these. The houses have air-insulated cushioned walls for both comfort and protection and ventilated sides with awnings and a rain-diverting extension over the doorway that keeps you dry as well as warm. All that's missing is a flower box!



Wait a minute! Denali is inching over in front of the door so I can't try it out. "Denali, that is NOT your doghouse, it belongs to the Iditarod Trail Committee so let me in!"

This is so unfair. I have spent all this time taking the pictures and letting Denali be the star and now she won't even let me stick my head inside to see what it is like. Just for that, she can't sleep on my sleeping pad with me tonight and my toys are off limits to her!

Hah! That'll teach her. Greg brought the Yukon doghouse inside the gift shop so visitors can see it. What a great reminder to Denali and all of us about the importance of sharing. I was only kidding when I said I wouldn't share my toys with her, of course. Sometimes we say things we don't mean.



You will be seeing and hearing more about the Yukon doghouses at race time, that's for sure. If you just can't wait and want to know more about them now, however, you can go to the [FIRSTRAX website](http://www.firsttrax.net/). I am so excited. I just know that my human will get me one of these fantastic doghouses for my very own. Just in case though, I'm putting this on my Christmas list to Santa. I bet your best K-9 friend would love one for Christmas too.

Until next time,



Lots of Tail Wags,
Zuma

FIRSTRAX WEBSITE <http://www.firsttrax.net/>