

# **IRON PAWS STAG RACE XV**

**January 1, 2026 - February 15, 2026**

## **What's new for 2026?**

This year we are offering play your way and endurance classes for fit teams that view training as a way of life. No mileage caps, any vehicle of transportation, no advanced degrees in Iron Paws math required.

We regret that we are unable to ship medals to competitors outside of Canada and the United States. The cost of shipping has proven prohibitive. We do love our international competitors, so we invite you to play at a discounted rate.

## **And a couple of reminders:**

We will offer bonus points for runs on New Year's Eve even though the race begins January 1st. We love traditions, and this is one of ours!

Begin all Facebook Group posts you make for points with hash tag your bib number (eg #bib101).

When you begin registration and pay, you will receive a link to enter your team information. You will need the invoice number from your paid entry in order to complete registration. Remember, each musher, even in the same family needs a unique bib number and team name. Make sure you follow directions on the form and register correctly. You will also need to join the Facebook IP 2026 race page to play along, and a link will be provided for that as well.

Stage 1 will be a short stage, but you should have enough time to collect enough points and bonus points to make it count.

Iron Paws relies on the honor system. Play fair. Be honest.

The biggest tangible award we offer is a finisher's medal. Please compete accordingly.

Traditional classes will still have mileage caps. Overall, the caps have had a positive impact on the race, making it safer for our canine friends and keeping competition fair and fun.

Some of our rules may seem a little odd if you are new to the race. Each class has slightly different rules, but don't sweat it. You aren't completing against people in other classes, and the rules are adjusted to suit the peculiarities of that class. Just know that there was a situation that prompted each of these irregular rules. It works!



# The 15th Annual Iron Paws Stage Race Begins Thursday, January 1, 2026

## General Rules

- 1 Iron Paws is a mushing sport. All dogs must participate in a properly fitting pulling harness. Dogs must be attached to the musher or rig with a proper gangline. Dogs should be in front of the musher and pulling.
- 2 Each team consists of one individual musher plus dog(s). Mushers are not interchangeable on a team, and family members must enter individually and be assigned unique bib numbers.
- 3 Each musher may enter up to 2 classes plus unlimited ODR/Handicappy. Each musher receives one bib number even if two teams are entered.
- 3 All classes must submit at least two miles per stage to earn points for that stage and score the stage as complete, with the exception of ODR, which is one mile.
- 4 Iron Paws 2026 is a 7 stage race. You must complete 6 stages to cross the finish line and receive this year's finisher's medal. Each team will have one bye week, or zero score. Your bye week will be your lowest scoring week (dropped to zero), a week you choose to skip (submit a zero score on the web form), or a week you forgot to enter your score. If you take a bye week and don't submit your zero score, your *Skip Penalty Box* credit will be used (see below).
- 5 Each stage runs Monday through Sunday with New Year's Eve as a bonus day. 3 points for running NYE and sharing a photo to the Facebook IP 2026 race page.
- 6 Scores are to be submitted through our website entry form no later than Wednesday, noon PST.
- 7 Each team receives two *Skip Penalty Box* credits. If you forget to submit points by the Wednesday deadline or under report points, you have two opportunities to request a correction. If you over report there is no limit to corrections and your honesty is greatly appreciated. After your credits have been used, your stage score will stand as reported, zeroed out if not reported, and will not be adjusted. No exceptions.
- 8 Iron Paw Factory manages points only, not individual behavior. Play nice.
- 9 Run at your own risk. Mush responsibly with the best interest of your dogs in mind. Consult your veterinarian before harnessing any dog under 18 months of age.
- 10 Helmets are recommended for all non-foot classes.
- 11 All posts for points made to the FB IP 2026 race page must begin with your bib number
- 12 Iron Paw Factory relies on the honor system. Play fair. Be honest
- 13 Teams can mix and match dogs. You can run any combination of dogs you like up to the maximum number allowable for your class. You may drop dogs mid run, but you may not add fresh dogs once you have started recording mileage.
- 14 Only one run per team, per day, collects points
- 15 Individual dogs may participate on more than one team, but each dog can only score one run per day for any team for a max of 4 runs per week. Play Your Way, Mldsize Sled, and Big Team Sled classes are excepted from the 4 run per stage rule and may train additional days.
- 16 Please follow all local rules for any trail your team uses.
- 17 Complaints about fellow competitors must be reported to the Race Marshal in a timely manner. When planning your winning strategy, and before submitting a complaint, please consider that the biggest tangible prize we offer is a finisher's medal. Focus on your own performance and trust others to do the same.

## **Classes**

### **Recreation Class**

This class is for non-competitive mushers who just want to have fun with their pup and share the experience with the rest of the IP community, or for those who want simplified score entry. You can use any mode of travel you desire. There will be no placements or scoring, but finishers still receive a finisher's medal. Weekly point submission will be a simple completed or did not complete submission. As in other classes, you can take one bye week.

- Complete at least 2 miles per stage
- Complete each stage Howladay (see Howladays)

### **Play Your Way (1-2 dogs)**

For those who want to mix dryland and snow mushing, or like to do a little bit of everything.

1 point per mile for any vehicle, snow or dryland - capped at 40 miles per week

### **Play Your Way I (3-4 dogs)**

For those who want to mix dryland and snow mushing, or like to do a little bit of everything.

1 point per mile for any vehicle, snow or dryland - capped at 40 miles per week

### **Play Your Way Endurance (1-2 dogs)**

Designed for fit/competitive teams that regularly train year round.

1 point per mile for any vehicle, snow or dryland - no mileage cap

### **Play Your Way Endurance (3-4 dogs)**

Designed for fit/competitive teams that train regularly year round.

1 point per mile for any vehicle, snow or dryland - no mileage cap

\*\*\*\*For larger teams, please note the midsize and big team sled classes already allow any vehicle and unlimited mileage.

### **Canicross (for runners)**

The Canicross class is for runners, and those who race in traditional canicross races. The majority of miles are to be completed running with your dog pulling out in front of the musher.

1 point per mile traditional canicross - capped at 60 miles per week

### **Canihike (for walkers and hikers)**

Our Canihike class is for walkers and hikers. Dogs are properly harnessed and are pulling out in front of the musher.

1 point per mile walking, hiking, or snowshoe - capped at 60 miles per week

### **Bikejor (1-3 dogs)**

1 point per mile bikejor, ½ point per mile for any other mode of travel - capped at 40 miles per week

### **Scooter or Cart (1-4 dogs)**

1 point per mile scooter or cart, ½ point per mile for any other mode of travel - capped at 40 miles per week

### **Fatbikejor (1-2 dogs)**

1½ points per mile true fatbikejor (on snow, sand, or mud - any condition that requires lower psi), 1 point per mile regular condition trail, or ½ point per mile for any other mode of travel - capped at 40 miles per week

### **Small Team Skijor (1-3 dogs)**

1 point per mile for ski, ½ point per mile for any other mode of travel - capped at 40 miles per week

### **Small Team Sled (1-4 dogs)**

1 point per mile for sled, ½ point per mile for any other mode of travel - capped at 40 miles per week

### **Midsize Team Sled (5-6 dogs)**

1 point per mile for sled or rig, or any other mode of travel. ATVs are acceptable - no mileage cap

### **Big Team Sled (7 or more dogs)**

1 point per mile for sled or rig, or any other mode of travel ATVs are acceptable - no mileage cap

### **ODR/Handicappy (1 dog)**

This class is for dogs who can't run on the team because they are too old, injured or handicapped - no dog left behind! **Mushers must have a team in a regular class in order to participate.** Dogs entered in ODR can not participate in any other class. There is no cost to participate - finishers earn a special e-certificate instead of a medal. Dogs must complete at least one mile per week, and may participate in any holiday or other special event that they find enjoyable. Late score submissions can be corrected at any time with no penalty because Old Dogs Rule! There are no points or placements, just happy dogs. Registration for this class is available after you register your official team, just before the race begins.

## **Points Explanations**

### **Howladays - 5 points**

Post Howladays to the IP 2026 Stage Race page, one post per team for 5 points each stage. You can interpret the howladay as creatively as you like, and as suits your team as long as you stick to the theme, except where specific rules are mentioned. You must share a photo or video of your Howladay entry. Bonus points may be offered each week at the discretion of your race organizers. The organizers reserve the right to change any stage's Howladays on a whim if we are inspired by a fun idea. Mushers competing in live in person races may substitute sled dog races for their Howladay.

Stage 1 • January 1 - 4 - Opening Selfie Ceremony - introduce yourself with a selfie. Show your face or it doesn't count! No cheating, no hiding.

Stage 2 • January 5 - 11 - Meme My Team - post your best meme (or worst, whichever is more entertaining).

Stage 3 • January 12 - 18 - Working On Our Night Moves - run at night! Extra points if you have enough lights to be seen from the International Space Station.

Stage 4 • January 19 - 25 - Iron Paws DB Curling Championship (Dog Bowl Curling Contest). More information will be provided when the event is closer.

Stage 5 • January 26 - February 1 - Satire Mushing Tips - most absurd tip you've ever received).

Stage 6 • February 2 - 8 - Movie and Popcorn Night - watch a movie with your team and share your dog's popcorn catch record. Or your record.

Stage 7 • February 9 - 15 - Closing Ceremony - post a photo of your team crossing the finish line.

### **Join the Community 7 points per day**

Volunteer or Compete at a sled dog club sponsored race to earn points each stage. Share the fun by posting a photo to the IP race page. In order to collect volunteer points, you must be an official race volunteer. Although helping a team to the start line is appreciated, it does not count for points. Max 14 point per stage

### **Media - 2 points each**

Help us collect great images. Upload up to 3 photos or videos of 30 seconds or less to our private Facebook group page. You may share up to 3 total for 2 points each. You can do this in any stage or stages along the way, but you only get 6 points max per stage. At least one photo must be of you with your team. No hiding or getting tricky, let us see your face. Don't forget to begin your post with your bib number

### **Fun and Games - points as awarded**

Part of the fun of Iron Paws is the unexpected. We love bonus challenges and games. Pay attention to announcements to the Facebook 2026 race page for opportunities to earn more points.

### **2026 IRON PAWS K9PACK RULES** - K9Pack points do not affect individual team standings

1. A K9Pack will consist of no less than 5 teams and no more than 10. \* Exception: Because Iron Paws encourages mentoring, a K9Pack may have an unlimited number of Recreation participants.
2. We encourage Iron Paw participants to join forces with local mushers. However, K9Pack members do not have to be from the same town, state or country. Feel free to mix it up!
3. A K9Pack's top 5 scoring teams per stage will earn points for their Pack Score.
4. Each K9Pack shall appoint a K9Pack Captain.
  - a. K9Pack Captains will be responsible for contacting the Iron Paws Race Marshall with questions or concerns.
  - b. K9Packs will create a K9PACK flag and a K9PACK mascot
5. A racer entered in more than one class can only represent one class per K9Pack. That individual is permitted to join more than one K9Pack (one K9Pack per class).
6. K9Packs may gain extra points per stage for:
  - a. Fun Runs (virtual, group, or a combination of both)

- b. Any member teams achieving top 3 scorer in their class, per stage
- c. Flag and Mascot post (show your flag AND mascot on the FB Event page, 10 points)

## **Awards**

- All finishers in Canada and the US will receive a medal. You must complete 6 stages to be a finisher. International competitors will receive a digital certificate for finishing.
- Members of the top K9Pack will receive additional recognition
- The top 3 finishers in each class will be recognized, except as noted in class descriptions
- Best Sportsmanship and Rookie of the Year will be recognized.
- The lowest scoring finisher will be recognized as the Red Lantern Winner.
- Finishers Medals will be mailed directly to U.S. competitors, and Canadian medals will be shipped to a single Canadian address and then redistributed to competitors via Canadian Post. As always, we are depending on the Canadian capacity for kindness and patience to help keep costs down. Certificates will be emailed in digital format.

## **Social Media Guidelines** (it's 2026 on the internet, so here we are)

Iron Paws has grown and hosts a diverse roster. We have competitors of all ages, wildly variable experience levels, and from all walks of life. Please keep the following in mind when interacting on our Facebook forum:

- Do not offer advice if none was requested. Nothing dampens the enthusiasm of someone growing in the sport more. Instead, celebrate and encourage success.
- Please do not assume facts not in evidence when viewing posts from other competitors. We want Iron Paws to be a fun and safe space for all. That photo of a puppy running in harness that maybe is too young was probably a fun photo op, not a 6 mile uphill run, or maybe the puppy is only learning gee haw commands, or... Point is, you don't know all the facts so don't assume you do. This is just one example.
- We trust our competitors to do what is safe and right for their team without judgment. Recreational mushing is not a one-size-fits-all sport. DO NOT CRITICIZE or pass judgment in the comments of someone's post. If you think you have all the facts and someone is truly doing something unsafe, please contact the race marshal.
- **Please use family friendly language.** Don't use any language that you wouldn't use when talking to a child or in front of grandma. We do have junior mushers, but the fact is that many adults do not enjoy colorful language either, so please don't use it here. If a moderator contacts you to edit a post, don't take it personally and make the change asap. If your post is removed, you may be contacted as to why. If you need to be warned repeatedly you will be removed from the Facebook group and unable to collect media points or get the latest information.
- Do not argue with other competitors on our forum. If you disagree, move along or hide them.
- If someone asks for advice and you have specific experience in that area, please reply thoughtfully. If you do not have specific experience, someone else here will and their advice will be more meaningful. Don't bother to speculate.
- Disrespectful behavior towards moderators or other competitors will not be tolerated and anyone doing so will be removed from the race and will forfeit entry fees.