

GUIDE FOR  
EVALUATING ANIMAL WELFARE IN  
ANIMAL-BASED TOURISM IN FINLAND

Animal species: Sled dogs



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## Animal species: Sled dogs

Over the last few decades, tourism has experienced continued growth, becoming one of the most important sectors in Lapland and other northern regions of Finland. Animals have played a considerable role in supporting this growth. Animal-based activities are not only very popular among tourists, but also one of the reasons for visiting northern Finland. Furthermore, animals such as sled dogs, reindeer, and Finnhorses have become an important branding element of Lapland and other tourism destinations in the North.

This document is one of four aiming to better guide the process of evaluating and communicating animal welfare in animal-based tourism activities in Finland. The focus is on three main animal species: sled dogs, reindeer, and horses. The documents are highly relevant at a time when animal welfare in tourism is being pushed forward due to consumer demand. While many tourists feel that close interaction with animals is an exciting way of spending a holiday, they also have become more aware of the negative impacts that tourism can have on animals. As a result, animal welfare is becoming a critical criterion used by tour operators to select their suppliers.

The document at hand provides a group of specific themes and focused questions to evaluate the welfare of sled dogs involved in tourism operations. The document aims to help animal-based tourism companies, destination marketing companies, tour operators, and other stakeholders to identify the issues that need to be considered to guarantee the welfare of sled dogs working in tourism. Moreover, this document builds a solid foundation for the future development of animal welfare criteria for auditing systems, certification, or other similar assessment tools focusing on sled dogs as working animals in tourism.

The themes and questions included in this document are the outcome of an action research process conducted in the project “Animals and responsible tourism: promoting business competitiveness through animal welfare”, which was funded by Business Finland under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). In addition to public funding, 10% of the project budget was financed by 10 Finnish tourism companies: Lapland Safaris, Harriniva Hotels & Safaris, Ranua Wildlife Park, Arctic Reindeer, Arctic Husky Farm, Hetta Huskies, Lapland Husky Safaris, OFF-Piste Adventures, Polar Lights Tours and Ruska Laukka. The project was implemented by the Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI), University of Lapland during the period 01.08.2016-31.07.2018. More information about the project can be found at [www.animaltourismfinland.com](http://www.animaltourismfinland.com)

In addition to the 10 companies co-financing the project, a wide range of animal welfare and responsible tourism experts took part in the action research process. The following experts were involved in the development of the document at hand: Vicki Brown (Responsible Travel), Professor Dominique Grandjean (National Veterinary School of Alfort, Medicine Unit of canine sport medicine) Mia Halmén (The Finnish Association for Fair Tourism), Tiina Kauppinen (Natural Resources Institute Finland, The Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare), Satu Raussi (Natural Resources Institute Finland, The Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare), Kati Pulli (Finnish Federation for Animal Welfare Associations), and Meike Witt (Exploring Iceland).

The structure, diction, and content of this document is based on two primary sources of information: 1) ‘Sled Dog Code of Practice’ produced by the Sled dog standard of care working group in the province of British Columbia, Canada, which was published in January 2012, and 2) The Sled Dog Standards of Care Regulation (B.C. Reg. 21/2012 / O.C. 65/2012). It is to be highlighted that this document uses direct quotations from the two aforementioned documents and fully acknowledges their role as a considerable resource. Taking 1) the nature of this document as a guide for evaluating animal welfare instead of being an academic publication with detailed reference practicalities and 2) the aim to guarantee fluent readability of the document into consideration, no continuous reference to these two documents is made within the text. This document strives to form a dialogue

between the information provided in the two aforementioned documents and the findings from the Animals and responsible tourism research project with the aim to continue the important work done in Canada, fully acknowledging its value. The absence of continuous reference to the documents within the text does not in any way underestimate the value of the aforementioned documents to the content, structure, and diction of this document but instead highlights their importance as a source of information.

Moreover, the document uses information provided in Eija Saavalainen's (2011) degree paper 'Suojelevatko eläinsuojelusäädökset rekikoiria?' ('Is animal welfare legislation protecting the sled dogs?') based on the joint project by the Lapland provincial government and the Finnish Food Safety Authority that focused on sled dogs in 2008-2009 and fully acknowledges Saavalainen's work. References to Finnish regulation, Government Decree for the protection of dogs, cats and other small-size pets and hobby animals (674/2010) [Valtioneuvoston asetus koirien, kissojen ja muiden pienikokoisten seura- ja harrastuseläinten suojelusta (674/2010)] are made within the text to connect the guide to Finnish legislation. Furthermore, an interview conducted with Canadian sled dog company performed during the project also provided valuable insights that are included in this document. Last, information available on the Hetta Huskies' website, one of the project companies, contributed to the development of the themes and questions included in this document as did their comments regarding the draft of the document.

This document was written and assembled by Researcher Tarja Salmela and Project Leader José-Carlos García-Rosell, University of Lapland, Multidimensional Tourism Institute, Finland.

## References:

Sled Dog Standard of Care Working Group (2012) Sled Dog Code of Practice. British Columbia, Ministry of Agriculture, Canada. [http://www.gov.bc.ca/agri/down/sled\\_dog\\_code\\_of\\_practice.pdf](http://www.gov.bc.ca/agri/down/sled_dog_code_of_practice.pdf). Last accessed 27.3.2018.

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, Sled dog standards of care regulation (B.C. Reg. 21/2012, O.C. 65/2012) [https://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/21\\_2012](https://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/21_2012). Last accessed 21.5.2018.

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# 1. Sled dog management

- What is the size of your company?
- How many dogs do you have?
- How many dogs have you had each year for the last 5 years?
- How long have you been operating?

## 1.1 Containment areas

- Does each containment area include a dog house?
  - Do dog houses provide an enclosed area that is large enough to permit sled dogs to stand, turn around, and lie down comfortably?
  - On the other hand, are the dog houses small enough to trap and retain heat in winter?
  - Do the dog houses have a ventilation system (e.g. airlock screws) to prevent moisture build-up?
  - Are the dog houses constructed and maintained so as to provide shelter from rain, wind, snow, sun, and other elements and protection from excessive heat and cold? Are the walls, roof, and floor of the dog houses thick? Do you possibly have thermal insulation in the dog houses? What type of thermal insulation?
  - Are the lower surfaces of the dog houses raised off the ground?
  - What material do you use as bedding? Straw or other?
  - What type of entrance do the dog houses have? Is it safe for the dogs? How is safety ensured?
    - » Is the entrance of the dog house the smallest possible size to allow the dog to enter, while being small enough to retain as much heat as possible?
    - » Are the house entrances equipped with a type of screen to prevent snow/rain from blowing in?
    - » Are the entrances open or equipped with 'doors'? If they are equipped with doors, how do you ensure that moisture does not get trapped inside the dog house, resulting in the bedding getting wet?
    - » What measures have been taken in the construction of the 'doors' to minimize the risk of the dogs destroying and/or ingesting them?
- Does each type of containment provide sufficient room for each sled dog within the area to (i) move freely and (ii) urinate and defecate away from areas commonly used for eating and sleeping?
- Does each sled dog in a containment area have sufficient opportunities to engage in species-typical behavior? What are these opportunities?
  - As fighting/territorial defense is a species-typical behavior, have measures been taken to *prevent* these behaviors for the health and well-being of the animals?
- In your planning of containment areas, have you taken into consideration possible special needs of dogs who, for example:
  - are prone to ingesting rocks in the summer time (containment areas with wooden floor or concrete cages)?
  - are prone to limping, exacerbated by jumping up and down from the roof of the dog house (cages with dog houses positioned outside the cage for dogs)?

- Are containment areas cleaned up at least once each day of fecal matter? If they are cleaned more than once a day, how often? Is it ensured that containment areas and any structures or equipment inside are maintained and in a sanitary condition?
  - What is your method of fecal matter disposal? Is the fecal matter disposal executed in an area that is a sufficient distance away from the dog houses? Is the area far from any point where it could potentially contaminate a water source?
  - What about drainage from the area during warmer months? What is done with the build-up of feces after a season/multiple working seasons?
- Are the materials used to construct a pen, or from which a tether is made, durable? What material do you use in both cases?
- Is it ensured that pens and tethers are designed and constructed so as to prevent sled dogs from injuring themselves? How? Are the pens and tethers maintained and in good repair? Who takes care of the regular monitoring of their condition?
- How do you avoid the dogs from eating small rocks?
- Do you offer a play area for the sled dogs? What type of play area? Do you arrange supervision for compatible dogs interacting in the play area?
- How do you organize the dogs running free in the area reserved for this purpose? Who runs together? How many dogs run together? How do you avoid unwanted fighting between the dogs?
- How do you ensure that the dogs do not escape from the play area (for example, in case somebody enters/exits the area and opens the gate/door unaware of the dogs running free)?
- Do you ensure that the sled dogs are released from their containment systems regularly for the purposes of socialization and exercise?
  - How often are your dogs released from their containment system?
    - » During off-season?
    - » During season (during free days)?
  - How long are the dogs released from their containment system at one time to socialize and exercise (in case of free socializing, not working)?
  - *See Canada's Sled Dog Code of Practice, Sled dog standard of care working group, p. 25 for further notions of Release from Containment Area.*
- Do you take sled dogs on frequent training and conditioning runs?
- Do you include activities other than running to fulfill the needs of the sled dogs to exercise, especially during off-season, such as swimming and playing? What activities do you include? How do you organize these activities in case you have a large number of dogs and reduced number of staff during off-season?
- Do you ensure that the level of exercise is appropriate for the age, level of fitness, and physical condition of the sled dog?
- Where do you keep the sick dogs?
  - Do you have a separate space for their treatment and recovery?
  - Do you have a designated space for the assessment, treatment, and housing of sick or injured animals and for the storage of any medications/medical equipment kept on the premises? How do you take care of the cleanliness of the area and the equipment used for this purpose? Who is in charge of cleaning?
- If a sled dog is isolated from its teammates (because of health issues, aggression, or a bitch is in heat), do you keep the duration of isolation at a minimum? What is the assessed maximum time of isolation you put into practice?

- Do you provide extra human interaction to isolated sled dogs? How do you organize this in practice?
- Are the containment areas under constant surveillance? How?
- Is the farm area surrounding the dog containment areas fenced for the safety of the animals (e.g. to prevent a dog becoming loose from the property in the event of an escape from a pen or a broken tether)?
- Do you have maintenance records of containment areas?

## 1.2 Pens or tethers

- Under which principles have you organized your farm to include both tethered dogs and dogs living in pens? Which dogs are tethered and which live in pens?

### 1.2.1 For sled dogs kept in pens:

- How large are the pens?
  - According to Finnish Government regulation 674/2010, the size of the pens depends both on the weight and number of dogs kept in the pen:

Number of dogs / average weight of the dog(s) / size of the pen						
	5 kg and less	10 kg	20 kg	30 kg	40 kg	50 kg and over
1 dog	5 m <sup>2</sup>	6 m <sup>2</sup>	8 m <sup>2</sup>	10 m <sup>2</sup>	15 m <sup>2</sup>	16 m <sup>2</sup>
2 dogs	5 m <sup>2</sup>	8 m <sup>2</sup>	10 m <sup>2</sup>	14 m <sup>2</sup>	18 m <sup>2</sup>	20 m <sup>2</sup>
3 dogs	6 m <sup>2</sup>	10 m <sup>2</sup>	13 m <sup>2</sup>	17 m <sup>2</sup>	22 m <sup>2</sup>	24 m <sup>2</sup>
4 dogs	8 m <sup>2</sup>	12 m <sup>2</sup>	15 m <sup>2</sup>	20 m <sup>2</sup>	26 m <sup>2</sup>	28 m <sup>2</sup>
5 dogs	8 m <sup>2</sup>	14 m <sup>2</sup>	18 m <sup>2</sup>	24 m <sup>2</sup>	30 m <sup>2</sup>	32 m <sup>2</sup>
6 dogs	10 m <sup>2</sup>	16 m <sup>2</sup>	20 m <sup>2</sup>	26 m <sup>2</sup>	34 m <sup>2</sup>	36 m <sup>2</sup>

- What material is the base of the pen? Why have you chosen this material?
- If group penning, how do you select the dogs staying in the same pen? How do you organize group penning according to the sex of the sled dogs? Who does the planning and organizing of group penning?
- In group penning, how do you monitor individual sled dogs to guarantee their wellbeing?
- Is individual penning provided for sled dogs that do not group well with other dogs?
- In case of individual penning, how do you ensure social contact and companionship with other animals and humans?
- Is it ensured that sled dogs are unable to escape from a pen? How? What type of solutions do you provide to keep the dogs inside the pens?
  - How do you manage dogs biting the pen walls, resulting in holes in the pens and possibly causing danger to the dogs?
  - How do you ensure that the pen doors cannot be opened by the dogs?
  - Is it ensured that the sled dogs cannot use the roof of the pens as a platform from which to climb or jump over a fence?
  - What arrangements are made to prevent the dogs from climbing over the fences such as roofing and border barricades?

- Are the gates of the pens wide enough to permit easy entry and exit? Are they simultaneously able to be closed quickly, if necessary?
- Are the pens free of standing water?
- How do you ensure that the ground in the pens does not get wet and muddy?

### 1.2.2 For sled dogs kept on tethers:

- **Have you ensured that the tethers are safe for the dogs? How?**
  - How have you ensured that the couplers do not get stuck around trees, poles, or other obstacles? *(also part of the Finnish Government Decree for the protection of dogs, cats, and other small-size pets and hobby animals (674/2010))*
- **How long are the tethers?**
  - *According to the Finnish Government Decree for the protection of dogs, cats, and other small-size pets and hobby animals (674/2010), dogs tethered more than occasionally must have a minimum of 40 square meter of space to move around. This means that the general requirement for the length of the tethers is 3,6 meters – a length used as a requirement in inspections conducted by communal veterinarians in Finnish Lapland (Lapland's tourism safety system project, 2009; Saavalainen, 2011).*
- **Are the tethers heavy? Have you ensured that the size and weight of the tethers will not cause discomfort to tethered dogs?**
- **How have you organized the placement of tethered dogs in your kennel? What issues do you take into consideration?**
  - Have you ensured that tethered dogs are not able to climb to near-by pens and risk getting choked by the tether after climbing the fence?
- **Have you ensured that tethered sled dogs can engage in safe physical contact with other sled dogs with the lowest possible risk of tangling?**
- **Have you ensured that tethered sled dogs can engage in safe physical contact with other sled dog with no overlap of adjacent tethers?**
- **Do you regularly inspect and maintain the tethering systems? Define 'regularly'.**
- **Do the tethers have, at the collar end, at least one swivel that can turn 360°? How do you ensure that, especially in the case of highly active dogs who move around a lot when tethered, the swivel will not get filled with fur, stopping it from moving, and thus causing danger to the dog?**
- **Are choke collars prohibited to be a part of a tethering method?**
- **Do you use travel tethers?**
  - How long are the travel tethers?
  - How long are the dogs tethered in the travel tethers? Is it only temporary? What is the maximum period of time?
  - Is it ensured that during this period, the dogs are able to eat as well as urinate and defecate in peace?



## 2. Records

- Do you keep track of your sled dogs, i.e. records that permit ready identification of each sled dog and the precise number of dogs staying in the farm/newborn dogs/deceased dogs, including the following information:
  - the sled dog's photograph, name, sex, breed, distinctive markings, birth date, possible date of acquisition, and the date of death, if known?
  - possible sled dog's registration, microchip or tattoo number?
  - female dogs' heat lists?
- In addition to individual records, do you have records (such as files, directories) for the packs of dogs that are easily accessible by all members of the staff (and possible auditors)?
- If you sell puppies, do you keep records of what happens to them, i.e. where do they go if you adopt them out?
- How about if you sell or give away older dogs (retired) or dogs that are not suitable for sledding but could be kept as pets – is there also a record of those dogs?
- In case you use euthanasia, do you document euthanized sled dogs? The reason, date, and practicalities of euthanizing? The name of the veterinarian that performed the euthanasia? (See also: 5. Life Span)

## 3. Sled dog health

### 3.1 Health records

- Do you keep a systematic health record of each sled dog, including:
  - vaccination and deworming records,
  - weight (date of weighing and the weight) records,
  - surgical procedures records,
  - illnesses or injuries records,
  - weekly medication consumption records (whole farm),
  - dog-specific medication consumption records over time,
  - feeding records (see also Section 4: Feeding),
  - known and suspected drug or food allergies records,
  - if applicable, breeding and whelping records?
- Where are these health records located? Are they hand-written or digital form? Are they easily accessible and interpretable by others (e.g. inspecting veterinarian/authorities)?
- Do you share relevant health records with practicing veterinarians, for example, using digital information, to enable a functional interaction when it comes to the dogs' wellbeing? How do you do this in practice?

### 3.2 De-worming and vaccinations

- Are the sled dogs regularly given de-wormers? How often?
- Are the sled dogs vaccinated on a regular basis? Do you have a vaccination program that lasts for the entire life span of the sled dogs? Who is in charge of the monitoring and keeping to the program? Against which diseases are the dogs vaccinated?

### 3.3 Veterinary check-ups

- Do you have regular check-ups by a veterinarian to monitor the overall health of the sled dogs? How often are these check-ups conducted?
- Do you have an established veterinary-client patient relationship with a practicing veterinarian?
- How many times does a veterinarian visit your company premises and check the dogs?
- Do you have regular dental care provided, including a routine examination of teeth and gums?
- Do you use analgesics and anti-inflammatories only under the direction of a practicing veterinarian?

### 3.4 Grooming and nail care

- Do you groom each sled dog sufficiently to ensure that
  - the sled dog is free of discomfort from excessive heat, and
  - the sled dog's coat is free of matting, parasites, and coat-related disease?
- Do you maintain the nails of each sled dog to prevent the penetration of the skin or foot pads, and digital displacement?
  - How often do you check the dogs' nail condition?
  - Who clips the nails of the dogs?

### 3.5 Other assessment of sled dog health

- Do you keep track of the weight loss, hydration, condition of the feet, behavior, attitude, and willingness to work of the dogs? How?
- In case of large sled dog farms, do you have a well-organized system, where the responsibility of keeping track of particular dogs is shared between selected members of the staff?
- Do you systematically follow the dogs' mental welfare? That they are motivated to work? Do you track changes in dogs' behavior? What is done to correct the situation?
- How do you ascertain the cause of a dog's melancholy/possible depression in practice? Do you rule out possible physical illness that might cause these symptoms?
- What do you do to take care of the dogs' mental welfare in practice? In winter, during the season? What about during off-season? For example, do you welcome volunteers that have time to play and be with the dogs in addition to taking care of daily chores, cleaning the containment areas, feeding, etc.?

### 3.6 Accidents and sickness

- Do you have a protocol in place in case of accidents? Who is responsible for evaluating the need for a veterinarian?
- Do you have a plan for how to get a sled dog home if an accident happens away from home? Do you take this into consideration when planning your routes? How, in practice? Is this included in both your company's risk assessment and crisis management planning documents?
- Do you provide means of isolation when a sick or injured sled dog requires individual care?
- Do you have a separate quarantine area to house and observe animals to prevent the spread of disease for a specified period of time and to observe for signs of illness?
- Who is responsible for checking on the sick/injured sled dog during the day/night?

### 3.7 Whelping and ensuring the health of puppies

- Do you provide appropriate nesting areas, including a large enough whelping box for the bitches? Do the bitches give birth to puppies indoors or outdoors? Is it supervised? Do you ensure protection for the puppies from excessive cold or heat, if the nesting area is not in a temperature-controlled building?

- Are the puppies exposed to a wide range of stimuli (yet not excessive) between the ages of 3 and 12 weeks to guarantee their socialization both with people, other dogs, other animals, vehicles, and household appliances?
- Do you forbid tourists from touching the puppies under six weeks old due to the risk of the puppies getting infectious diseases, as the puppies are not yet vaccinated? If you include the possibility to see puppies in the tourist program, how do you organize the event to not risk the health of the puppies?
- How do you organize the socialization of tourists with the puppies, so that the safety and wellbeing of the puppies is guaranteed?

# Feeding and watering

## 4.1 Feeding

- What kind of feed do your dogs get? Is the food formulated for working dogs and is of a high quality? Be precise.
- Do you have different types of food for dogs with different needs (younger dogs, older dogs, dogs on diet, dogs with allergy, special diet, etc.)?
- Who is in charge of feeding the dogs? Is it a specific guide taking care of her/his own pack, or do you have some other way of managing the feeding?
  - If a member of the staff who is not closely familiar with the dogs performs the feeding, how do you guarantee that the dogs get fed in a way that ensures their individual wellbeing?
- Does the feed guarantee a balanced diet that is sufficient to meet the sled dog's caloric and nutritional requirements? How do you ensure that diets are nutritionally complete and balanced?
- Do you provide a different type of food for the dogs during winter and summer?
- How many times are the dogs fed per day? Is it ensured that each sled dog is fed at least once every 24 hours?
- Do you have feeding records?
- How do you mitigate the risk of pathogen exposure when handling raw food?
- Where is the food stored? Is the place cool, dry, and free of contamination by rodents and insects?
- Do you monitor the preservation temperatures of the food? How is this done in practice?
- Are the surfaces of the feeding area made of a material that allows for regular cleaning and disinfection?
- Who is responsible for evaluating if a dog needs more or less feed because of weight loss or gain?
- How do you manage feeding, so that all dogs have the possibility to consume their own food without competition from other dogs? How do you secure that dogs that are low in the hierarchy get access to feed?
- How do you organize the feeding during multi-day-tours? Do you bring the food with you to the place where the group will rest (by the guides), or do you take the food to those places beforehand? Who is responsible for doing this? What happens to the leftover food?
- How many times a day are non-nursing puppies fed until the age of six months?
  - Do they eat freely?
  - How do you organize the feeding, if there are some puppies that dominate others during eating?

## 4.2 Watering

- How often are the dogs hydrated during the day? When? How much water at once?
  - Describe the practices both during winter and summer months.
- How do you monitor your dogs' hydration status?
- Does the staff take the water to the pen themselves to be able to monitor/evaluate the condition of the dogs and their hydration status?
- Are the dogs provided with clean water containers? How do you ensure that each sled dog has access to clean and palatable drinking water in adequate quantities to meet its needs and prevent dehydration?
- How many water points (vesipiste) do you have in your farm?
- How do you deal with freezing temperatures and access to water in winter (heated water bowls)?
- Do you encourage water consumption in the winter by offering warm flavored water (i.e. dry food, meat or cooked fish with water)? How is feeding and watering managed during overnight tours?
- Do you monitor your sled dogs' hydration status by observing their hunger for snow and by examining their skin and gums as well as the color of their urine?
- Do you melt snow to water the dogs, if camping on the trail?

## 5. Weather conditions

- Are the rides with the sled dogs adjusted according to weather (shorter, slower)?
- Do sled dogs have access to warm water, especially after the tours in winter?
- Do you cancel the tours due to challenging weather?
- During the summer period, do you have a temperature limit when the dogs are not to do any physical exercise other than what they voluntarily do (such as when being released to socialize and move freely in an area reserved for this purpose)?

## 6. Working conditions

### 6.1 Working hours

- How do you plan the working hours/days off/holidays of the sled dogs?
- Do you have a protocol on paper and/or electronically to record the actual numbers of the actualization of your plan? Who is responsible for the accuracy of the protocol? Does it include information about accidents/sickness and recuperation days?
- Do sled dogs get days off? How do they spend their days off?
- Do sled dogs get holidays (multiple days off)? Is it season-specific? Please explain.
- Do you work your dogs year-round?

### 6.2 Working and training practices

- Who is in charge of the training of the dogs? Is it a professional? Do dogs have a training plan? Do you train your sled dogs to learn basic commands as puppies?
- Do you have a particular pre-season training program?
  - *This means planning distances and duration of runs, considering temperature and terrain conditions, ensuring that the dogs' condition is suitable for the sharp increase in demand for the dogs to work as soon as the season begins.*
- Do you refuse to work your dogs in marginal conditions that might result in them suffering from hypothermia, frostbite, hyperthermia, or dehydration?
- Do you ensure that sled dogs are not worked beyond their willingness, capability, or conditioning?
- Do you ensure that sled dogs are not dragged or physically coerced?
- Do you ensure that sled dogs are not pushed beyond their natural abilities by administering drugs or medications to enhance performance?
- Do you ensure that your training methods do not cause fear, distress, or pain to the sled dogs?
- How do you avoid the predisposing of sled dogs to heat stress, especially during summer, outside the winter season?
- Do bitches work only after their puppies are weaned?
- How do you deal with occasions when a dog has a behavioral problem? Do you seek advice from a practicing veterinarian, dog trainer, or dog behaviorist already at the early stages of the problem?

### 6.3 Gear

- How do you choose the harnesses, collars, and other equipment for the sled dogs in order to ensure they are well-made and well-fitted? What characteristics you consider important when it comes to the selection of your equipment?



- Where do you store the gear?
- What types of collars do you use? Do you use collars during off-season?
- How do you monitor that none of the equipment causes discomfort, injury, or difficulty breathing, and that it is in good repair? Are you monitoring that collars do not damage the dogs' skin or restrict their breathing?
- Do you use additional gear (such as belly covers, booties, loose-fitting wind-proof jackets) for susceptible dogs and, if used, ensure their proper fit and comfort? What additional gear do you use?
- Do you carry appropriate tools for cutting and removing lines or other equipment in an emergency at all times while working sled dogs?
- Do you use efficient lighting in the sleds when arranging tours in dark hours of the day?
  - Do you avoid riding in the dark?
  - What about reflectors? Do the harnesses have reflectors? Do they work well or get lost in the dogs' fur?
  - *Appropriate lighting and reflectors have a crucial role in guaranteeing the safety of sled dog tours, especially if the sled dog teams cross dangerous areas during the tour, such as crossroads and railways.*
  - Who is in charge of the condition of the gear? Is there guide-specific gear (guides taking care of her/his own pack and sleighs, etc.)? What about common gear? Who is responsible for the condition of the common gear, especially if you have a higher staff turnover?
  - Do you have gear maintenance records?

## 7. Life span

- Do you breed your own dogs? Do you have a breeding plan?
- Do you keep records of all (even accidental) mating (even if they do not result in puppies being conceived or an abortion injection is given)?
- How do you choose the dogs to be used for breeding? What characteristics do you value?
- How many litters do your sled dog breeding females have in one year? During their lifetime?
- How do you avoid the possibility of unwanted pregnancies? Do you spay or neuter all dogs that are not intended for breeding? Have you consulted the ideal time for these procedures through consultation with a practicing veterinarian?
- Do you make detailed calculations of the approximate amount of money needed to take care of each dog to plan your cash flow? Who performs the calculations? Do you have them documented?
  - Do you calculate the balance between the retired/old dogs that possibly stay in the farm after their active years and the need for young dogs that allow you to make enough money to run your business?
- Do you have a socialization plan for all sled dogs?
- Do you sell dogs from your premises?
- What happens to dogs that are not suitable for pulling (too excited, shy, aggressive)?
- At what age do you start using the dogs commercially? And up to what age?
- As an alternative to breeding, do you look for dogs that need a home that could join your team?
- What happens to old dogs?
- Do you have a phased retirement plan for the sled dogs?
- If you practice re-homing, do you have a re-homing plan?
- If you practice re-homing, how do you ensure appropriate new homes for retired sled dogs? What do you require from the person giving the dog a new home?
- Do you provide documents of the re-homing process to the person giving the dog a new home? What type of documents?
- If you keep geriatric dogs until the end of their natural lives, what is the everyday life of these dogs like – do they help in training puppies and young dogs, for example? Are they provided adequate space and mental stimulation?
- If you practice euthanasia, do you have a euthanasia plan? Is it developed together with a practicing veterinarian?
- Who carries out euthanasia in your premises? Is the veterinarian involved in all cases, or do you perform euthanasia yourselves as well? How do you do it? Who performs it?
- How is euthanasia performed? Is it performed out of the sight of the other sled dogs to minimize distress?

- Do you keep a record of euthanized sled dogs and the reasons that led to the euthanasia decision as well as the efforts made to avoid euthanasia of healthy dogs?
  - Are these records easily accessible and interpretable by others (e.g. inspecting veterinarian/ authorities)?
- How are the remains of dogs disposed?

## 8. Staffing

- Do you have a farm manager? Is s/he a professional?
- Do you have a defined line of command? Who is responsible for calling the veterinarian, organizing supervision of injured, sick dogs, etc.?
- What kind of education does your staff have and receive while they are working for your company? How did they come to work in your company? What backgrounds do they have?
- Do you have a structured educational program for new employees and seasonal workers? What is it like? Are there certain stages that everybody goes through?
  - *The content and practical execution of the educational program depends on the size of the company. For smaller companies, it is natural that the educational program is put into practice, for example, through mentoring. For large companies with more employees and a greater turnover of the staff, for example, in the form of seasonal workers, the importance of a detailed educational program grows.*
- Does your new personnel work with senior guides to gain experience? For how long? How do you know that the new guide is ready to take sole responsibility of the dogs and the customer group?
  - *Through this, the company avoids a situation where the animals sense the uncertainty of newcomers, which has an effect on their welfare as well as customer safety.*
- If your company has both permanent and seasonal workers, do the experienced members of staff take responsibility of areas/tasks in the farm that require experience and specific expertise to ensure animal welfare?
  - *To divide tasks between experienced and new staff, inexperienced staff enables a more careful reading of the animals and their state (both physical and mental).*
  - *This division of tasks ought to be taken into careful consideration already when planning working schedules.*
- Do your staff members take responsibility for their 'own pack' of dogs and do everything related to taking care of the dogs, or do you divide specific tasks between the staff who then work with all the dogs?
- Does your staff have the competence to identify signs of heat stress, hypothermia, toxicariasis, and other conditions that might pose a serious threat to the welfare of sled dogs?
- Who makes sure that the sleds and dogs are selected and prepared according to number of passengers, their weights, etc.?
- Does the staff treat dogs as individuals? For example, which dog likes to be petted or needs more privacy.
- Do you employ volunteers?
  - Where do they usually come from/what is their background?
  - What type of work do the volunteers do? How do you audit and monitor them?
  - Do you provide lodging and food for them? How long do they stay on average?
- Do you give your staff the possibility to speak openly and critically? Are they encouraged to speak up?

- In case your guides take care of their own pack of dogs, do you provide the possibility for other guides to spend time with the dogs from another pack to evaluate their wellbeing and the way the guide works with the dogs?
- Does your staff speak all of the languages of your clients? In case they do not, how do you manage these situations? If the customers do not understand your instructions due to the language barrier, what do you do? (see also 9. Customer)
- Does your staff have good knowledge of history, geology, cultural aspects (folk tales) of the area and trails? Do you actively work to improve the skills of your staff?
- Does your staff share the same principals, for example, when it comes to talking calmly to the dogs and not shouting? Do you have a high standard for your staff?
- What do you do when you find somebody acting against the sled dogs' welfare, for example, yelling at the dogs or making them feel threatened?
- Do you have well-planned working schedules both for the animals and the staff members to ensure their recovery?
- Do you share staff work shifts, so that the same members of staff do not work from the morning until late evening?
- Do you plan work schedules well in advance? Do you try to guarantee the staff longer free periods after the high season?
  - *Proper planning enables the possibility for the staff to plan and enjoy their personal lives.*
- Do you provide the opportunity for the staff to say their opinions on the planned schedule? Is the schedule available for them to see and comment on/propose their wishes?
- Do you provide practical means for the staff to write down important ideas for others to see? A notebook, something else?

## 9. Customer

### 9.1 Customer education

- Who takes the reservation for the tours? Do they have enough experience in asking preliminary information from the customers?
- What happens when the customers arrive to the site? Do you give your customers a thorough introduction? Before, during, or after the tour? Do you tell them about sled dog breed, training, and management? Do you tell them about safety?
- Do you take the customers on a tour of your premises and perhaps introduce them to the retired dogs that might stay in the farm? Do you make the daily chores in the farm, like the preparation of the food, the giving of medication to the dogs, etc., visible to educate the customers?
- Do you explain to your customers what they are allowed/not allowed to do when in the kennel?
- Do you allow your customers to participate in tours under the influence of alcohol or drugs?
- Do your guides interact with customers in a straight and genuine way to guarantee animal welfare and customer safety in every circumstances, without exceptions? Does the staff act in a way as to ensure there is no risk to the welfare of the animals and/or customer safety when guiding customers, even if it is at first considered 'rude'?
- How do you make sure that they get all the information needed for the ride or visit to the farm?
- Do you use, for example, videos (subtitled in the customer group's native language whenever possible) to share information about the animals and the activity about to take place, including practical instructions on how to behave around the animals? Or do you have written instructions in, for example, Chinese, Japanese, or Russian, which the customers can follow once the guide goes through the instructions by demonstrating them?
- Do you teach and use hand gestures at the time of and during the preparation for the activity?
- Do you handle and explain the causes of possible problems in the presence of customers and how to deal with them directly on site whenever possible?
  - *Transparency empowers the customers when they can understand what is going on and, for example, in case of injury to an animal, what is going to happen to it, who is going to treat the animal and when.*
- Do you ask the customers to sign a waiver (vastuuvapaussopimus) before taking part in the activities with the dogs? What information does it include?
  - *Using this type of document to be signed by customers can enhance customer engagement with the rules and important instructions provided by the company.*

### 9.2 Customer transparency

- Are your customers allowed to visit the entirety of your premises? Are there areas/times when customers are not welcome? Why?
- Do you have a code of conduct for customers, such as not walking into dog pens while waiting for the safari to start, not feeding them, etc.?

- How is the code of conduct made visible to the customers visiting your farm? Do you have printed sheets or posters? Do the guides mention this policy verbally during the initial briefing when the customers arrive?
- Do you have a board that presents information about dog welfare visible to clients?

### **9.3 Customer evaluation**

- Do you have a questionnaire, where customers can rate their experience in the farm?
  - If not, what type of tools do you use to get feedback?
- Do you have work sessions with your staff to improve areas that have been criticized?

# 10. Business and tour management

## 10.1 Planning and provision of tours and business

- What types of tours and rides do you provide to the customers? What are the durations? Do you provide short tours? What is the minimum length of your tours?
- Do you have a guiding principal of the minimum/maximum length of the tour that is based on the sled dogs' welfare that you follow even when there would be a demand for shorter/longer tours?
- Do you offer possibilities for longer stays, where the customers participate in the everyday life in the farm, for example, for a week? What do customers do in practice? How are the customers monitored while working/spending time with the dogs?
- How do you plan your routes? Describe the practicalities of planning. How do you take the capacity of the dogs to pull the chosen route into consideration?
- Do your routes include any danger, such as of road, railway, or other type of crossings, where different types of vehicle move? If they do, how do you minimize the risk of accidents?
- In case you have planned, for example, a route with some risks, which the experienced staff is able to handle, how do you guarantee that all members of staff, including the seasonal staff, are able to deal with the risks?
- How do you plan the pulling teams? Who performs it? How do you take individual characteristics and needs of the dogs into consideration when planning the teams? Explain.
  - *This planning includes deliberation of which particular individuals suit the particular group of customers the best and is based on their character, mutual relationships, strength level, age and experience in the farm.*
- Do you have a Plan B and C ready, if something does not work out with the team planned to pull in a selected tour?
- How do you ensure your cash flow during summer?
- Do you provide tours during summer? How long do they last? What do the customers do in these tours?
- Do your dogs have a chance to have a holiday during the summer time? Are they brushed and groomed regularly?
- How much staff do you have working in the farm during summer months? Do you have volunteers in the farm during summer to keep the dogs active and mentally stimulated? (see also 8. Staffing)
- How do you plan and organize customer groups of different sizes and cultural backgrounds in practice to best ensure that both the animals and the staff have the best conditions to recover during and between workdays?



## 10.2 Accident plan

- Do all the guides have valid First Aid certifications (should be renewed every 2 years) and first aid equipment?
- Do you have a system for how a guide in a no-signal area could contact emergency services? Shooting up emergency flares, satellite phone, emergency beacon, one guide staying with the group, while the other rides for help?
- Are all guides, helpers, and clients familiar with this plan?
- Do you have a backup plan in place to replace injured/sick dogs? Transportation or farms nearby?
- Do you have a First Aid Kit for people and dogs? Are the guides professional enough to spot sickness, such as colic, and treat for it?
- Do you have a plan in case of an aggressive fight during a tour, leading to the injury of a sled dog/dogs?
- Are your teams led by a guide with a snowmobile to be able to react fast to any circumstances causing risk to the customers or the dogs?
- Do you use a surveillance system (seurantajärjestelmä), for example *Mapitare*, to enhance security and enable better communication between the staff members?

## 10.3 Accommodation for sled dogs during tours

- On multiple-day tours, where do the dogs stay at night? (Do they stay in travel chains, cages, or kennels? What type of kennels?)
- Do you guarantee the provision of shelter for the dogs during the tours? What type of shelter? Where is the shelter located?
- Have you arranged specific pens along the multiple-day tour route, where the dogs can rest during the night?
- How is the safety of the dogs guaranteed? Is the accommodation comfortable, so the sled dogs can get a good rest?
- Does the resting place have access to fresh water (very important on long tours)?

## 10.4 Transportation of sled dogs

- Do you only transport sled dogs fit for transportation (unless they are transported to veterinary care), meaning that sled dogs that display signs of shock, exhaustion, severe injury or illness, or females within one week of their anticipated whelping date or within the first two weeks of whelping are not transported?
- How do you transport sled dogs? Do you use dog boxes or crates (containers)?
- If you use containers, are they large enough for the sled dog to stand, turn around, and lie down comfortably?
- Are the containers well-constructed from durable materials and maintained in good repair?

- Do the containers have secure latches and locking devices to prevent the dog from escaping? Are the containers securely attached to the transport vehicle?
- Do the containers have adequate ventilation?
- Do you pay attention to organizing compatible companions when transporting sled dogs in groups?
- When transporting puppies, do you avoid separating nursing puppies from their mother for more than a couple of hours?
- Do you avoid transporting a weakling puppy that may be harmed by its companions?
- How do you organize the sled dogs' access to palatable and clean water during transportation? How do you organize the feeding of the dogs during transportation?
- Do you remove your dogs from the containers regularly during transportation to ensure they are in good condition, not in distress, and provide them with feed, water, and the possibility for eliminate and stretch?