

Dog Sledding in Canada's Arctic

Did You Know?

"Gee" means right turn and "haw" means left turn when commanding a dog sled team.



Dog sleds are a way of transportation over ice and snow that is still used today. Although people have replaced sled dogs with snowmobiles, they are still used for hunting, racing and tourism.

Dog sleds originated when people needed to pull goods and supplies on ice and snow-covered ground. Aboriginal people in Canada had been using sled dogs as a way of transportation before Europeans arrived. In fact, the first Arctic explorers used sled dogs. They have been used to hunt and to warn people of predators such as bears. They were also used to deliver mail.

In the spring when the sea-ice begins to break, taking a dog sled to the water to watch marine life is great fun!

Appearance

A dog sled consists of a sled and one or more dogs attached at the front to pull it. A musher sits in the sled to command the dogs.

Dogs

Huskies are the most common dog to pull dog sleds. They must be powerful, have dense warm fur and have lots of energy.

Diet

Sled dogs are fed high fat and protein-rich food.

Footwear

Sled dogs usually wear booties to help keep their paws safe from the harsh snow and ice underfoot.

Common Sled Dogs

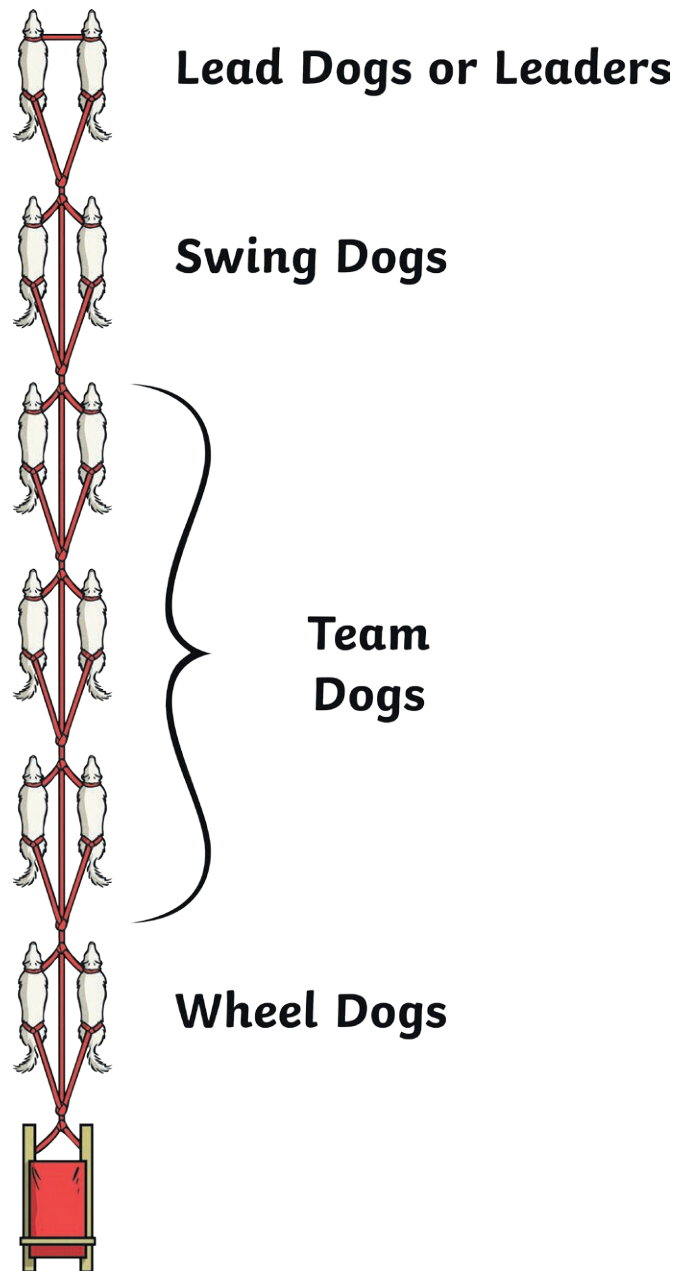
- Siberian Husky
- Samoyed
- Greenland Dog
- Chinook
- Canadian Eskimo Dog
- Alaskan Malamute
- Alaskan Husky



Roles of Sled Dogs

The sled dogs all have an important role to play. They are usually leashed in pairs.

- Lead Dogs
- Swing Dogs
- Team Dogs
- Wheel Dogs



Lead Dogs

These dogs set the pace for the other dogs on the sled. They also lead the other dogs, sometimes along snow-covered paths. They know their direction by the musher's commands as well as smelling other dog sleds that have been on that trail. They use their sense of touch with their feet to feel the path under their paws.

Swing or Point Dogs:

These sled dogs are behind the lead dogs. They help the dogs navigate around corners by swinging the dogs in an arch to keep the other dogs and musher on the trail.

Team Dogs

Team dogs maintain speed and do some of the heavy pulling of the sled. There are more team dogs than any other type on the team and the number depends on the weight of the cargo.

Wheel Dogs

Wheel dogs are the two dogs closest to the sled and must be strong to carry the heavy weight from the sled, especially when climbing hills and starting their journey. They are the first ones to take on the weight of the sled.

