

Working Team & Lead Dog Advanced & Excellent

The Advanced and Excellent sledding titles both call for training, conditioning and attitude above and beyond that of the average working dog. The advanced title stipulates a high level of performance without undermining the high achievement of the excellent title. As such, both titles demand a high quality working dog appropriately trained and conditioned and with the requisite work ethic. Training, conditioning and attitude are essential components of any dog earning these titles, with more being expected of an Excellent level dog. Distance traveled and the time in which it takes to move a given load are both indicators of above and beyond training, conditioning and attitude.

In fair conditions on excursions, it would typically be expected to see small teams traveling an average of 3-4 mph, medium teams between 4-5 mph and larger teams around 6 mph or more. Load and conditions (weather, trail, etc.) may impact travel positively or negatively. The overall picture of a trip is taken into account when judging applications, including all concerns regarding animal welfare and sportsmanship. This would extend to responsible care and safe practices for all dogs on the team and sportsmanship and safety toward other users of the trail. Any applicant in violation will be disqualified from certification. (WD rule 5.2 applies)

The Advanced sledding title was proposed by a group of mushers who wanted to recognize exceptional dogs who faced external limitations, such as reduced access to large trail systems and having smaller teams who could not travel the same daily distances as larger teams. This title demands the same “above and beyond” characteristics as the Excellent title, however was designed for and is better suited to smaller teams and those who may not have access to larger trail systems or long cold weather training seasons.

Regarding mileage at the Excellent level, 60 mile legs were typically accomplished in one to two days or during a single day on distance races. The Working Dog title asks for a minimum of ten miles per day. The Advanced title asks for a minimum of 25 miles per day or a minimum of 30 miles per leg divided into a minimum of 15 miles per consecutive day with an overnight camp-out. No exceptions to mileage are made for these degrees of certification. Please consider as you plan your races and excursions that if this is the requirement for the other degrees, the expectation at the excellent level will be greater regardless of team size or situation. Daily mileage has remained unspecified in order to allow the committee to account for load, team size, weather and trail conditions, as on longer trips these factors may vary from trip to trip and trail to trail more so than on shorter trips.

The working sled dog titles were designed to promote and preserve the functional and historic characteristics of the Alaskan Malamute and to encourage participation in such endeavors. The program must remain meaningful even when modern times present a different situation than historic times. It is critical that we adhere to a high standard of performance otherwise what makes the Alaskan Malamute the Alaskan Malamute will be lost.

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