

# Army Recruiting Racing Dogs; Uses Meter-Maid's Cart for Training

By MARY MOSES  
Staff Writer

What are the Army's "military secrets" of training sled dogs?

One of the most important secrets is to drive the dogs all summer, according to U.S. Army representatives buying dogs in Fairbanks this week. "I figure training dogs in summer is half the battle—the winter is the other half," said E-5 Larry Gibson.

True to this belief the Army is driving every dog before buying it. They use a converted meter-maid's cart as a sled. It has three wheels and steers with handle bars. Two men can sit on it.

Even better, this peculiar sled has sturdy brakes that will hold the team still while the driver rearranges dogs.

Before purchasing each dog, the Army gives the animal a thorough physical examination—just as if drafting men. The dogs eventually get their Army shots, for rabies, dis-

temper and hepatitis.

The Army will purchase 11 dogs in the Fairbanks area this week, from three different

kennels. The dogs are selected from experienced racing dogs known for speed and endurance.

The animals will be used both for racing and for patrols. Last year one group of men traveled 240 miles by dog team on one patrol. Gibson explained that the dogs were used because the men could see more on the ground, and a dog team never gets weathered-in as an airplane does.

The Army feeds their racing dogs the same menu summer and winter. The daily ration is eight ounces of canned

liver beef, one and three quarters pounds of Purina Dog Meal, and one teaspoon Vitamycin. In the summer a fresh supply of water is kept constantly at each dog house. In winter the dogs get water twice daily.

Dogs are trained in small teams, then put together in larger teams just before races. Five to eight dogs is the standard summer team. No more than five dogs are driven each trip in winter. Gibson explained, "You don't gain anything by running larger

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WHOA!—E-5 Larry Gibson puts on the brakes as his new recruits come back from a three-mile trial run. The sled is a converted

meter-maid's motor cart, which the dogs pull by the bumper.

Photo by MARY MOSES

## Army Racing Dogs . .

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teams—a dog has to learn to pull."

Another Army innovation is a special stretchable cord inserted in the back line near the tow line. This cord woven into the center of the back line rope absorbs shock as the dogs run. It will also prevent dogs from hurting themselves by jerking on the line while being harnessed, or when starting.

The dogs will be stationed at Fort Richardson, Alaska, with the other Army racing dogs. It has not yet been decided who will race the Army team next year.

The eleven dogs purchased this week will bring the Army's arsenal of sled dogs to 37, although some of these will be honorably discharged due to old age.

Each dog receives excellent medical care, including daily cleaning of the kennels. Each dog is also groomed daily. One dog is even scheduled to have his tonsils taken out this summer.

Four representatives are here buying dogs for the Army. They are E-5 Larry Gibson of Henderson, Kentucky; E-2 Pat Stephan of Anchorage; E-3 John Armstrong of Idaho, and Sgt. James Van Houten, who was Joe Reddington's handler last winter.

Gibson and Van Houten are the senior dog racing men. Both have been in Alaska four years, in dog racing three years. Armstrong has been in Alaska only 18 months.

The Army methods of training and racing sled dogs have been well proven. Of 15 races run last winter, the Army took nine first places and three second places. Two times the Army team ran fourth. Only once was it "out of the money"—tenth place.

(NOTE: While waiting for the Army dogs to be ready for driving, the Tundra Times reporter was forced to leave the Fort Wainwright Veterinary Clinic by an extreme allergy to the large number of cats kept there. Several of the dogs seemed to share the allergy—but it didn't affect their running.)