

Iditarod mushers ship food, ready for race

Seventy-three mushers lined up on February 12, 13, and 14, to ship food to the various checkpoints along the Iditarod Trail. Food shipment is one of the biggest jobs of the pre-race preparations as each musher plans, cooks and packs everything that will be needed on the two-week trek to Nome. Comments of "Thank God that's over," and "never again," could be heard along with the sighs of relief as the mushers watched their drops being weighed at Airland Transport's huge warehouse.

A total of 139,788 pounds (almost 70 tons) in 3,753 specially marked white polyester bags will be moved to the 19 drop points along the trail. Each musher sends his own personal mixture of food for his dogs, personal food and extra gear such as booties for his dogs, socks and gloves for himself.

Volunteers from Anchorage, Elmendorf, Ft. Rich, Eagle River and Wasilla were on hand to immediately sort the food onto pallets for each checkpoint. The entire operation was under the supervision of the food drop coordinator, Ray Howell. Ray will be traveling with the food to insure delivery to the checkpoints before the mushers arrive. Once the race begins, the mushers are totally dependent on these drops to replenish their supplies.