

# Vet Corner



Harris Dunlap

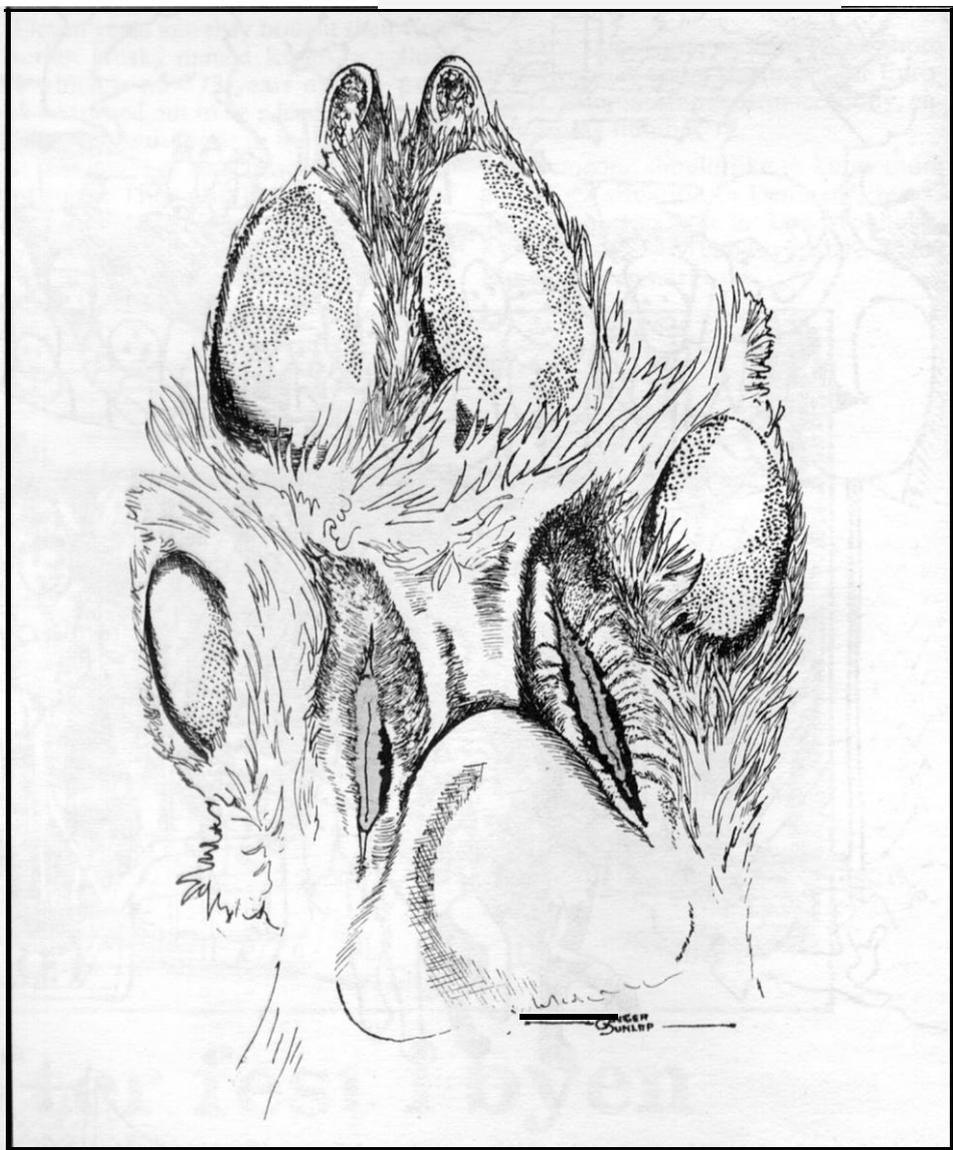
No **feet means no dog!** You can't expect a good sled dog to give you his best performance with bad feet, whether you are going 3 miles at very high speed or 300 miles at a trot. Pain does not allow you to give your best. As Mimsy Brisbois pointed out in HOWL's first Winter, **issue (Vol. II, No. 1, Vet Corner, page 16)**, with winter's cold comes **special** problems and particular care and attention is needed for hard working sled dogs.

Prevention of foot problems should be a major concern. If you are experiencing a lot of wet weather, wet snows or rain with snow creating slush, you should be careful not to let your dogs stand in these conditions for any extended time. If you can, put saw dust down in these areas. Dry **saw** dust. Dry saw dust is extremely **absorbant**. Dairy farmers often use a commercially dried extremely fine No. 2 **saw dust**. This product is dried by pro-

cessors like Northeastern Products Co. in air tumblers. These folks call their product, Farmers Mix. These are bagged in large bales about the size of a 50 pound bag of dog food. They cost about \$1.00 to \$1.50 and act just like a sponge. A bag will do 5 or 6 dog areas. Ask your local farmer where he gets his saw dust, many have their favorite sources. However, remember it must be dried.

If you can't afford or acquire this product, consider putting your dog in the truck, or barn type building, during these wet weather conditions. This is a small price to pay for preserving your best athletes feet.

Remember, WET feet lead to SOFT pads. Soft pads cut on rough ground, either from gravel or harsh snow conditions that often follow these wet winter snow/rain/sleet type conditions. Also wet



*A serious condition caused by crystalline snow is FISSURES or pressure splits. These can be so severe as to cause swelling. They often "weep" and further cause healing problems.*

conditions soften the inside of the foot between the pads. This can lead to cold weather SPLITS or FISSURES. More on this later.

You can further assist wet weather pad softening by putting on a water repelling inexpensive product called **KOPPERTOX**. you can carry a can of this in your truck. It water proofs the foot and stops the drying affect. Wear old pants, gloves and boots, like all good water proofing agents, they stain — this one leaves you with green boots. Another good product. but it is more expensive. is made by the well known Happy Jack people, it is called PAD KOTE. It, like **Koppertox**, comes in a good dispenser that allows for more product on the area and less on you. This leaves you a pretty blue but care can help you avoid your mother's complaint about your new gloves from suddenly turning a wrong color. In fact, Pad Kote finally abandoned the glass bottle and uses a handy plastic applicator. In addition to water proofing. Pad Kote aids in keeping the foot pliable while playing its role as a drier and healer.

As such it assists healing, especially from fissures. Too, sometimes there weeping fissures cause bacteria related problems. A dark red colored fungus type condition can result further complicating the healing process. Pad Kote works very well at fighting this complication.

The real trick is to ALWAYS keep your bedding CLEAN and DRY. Urine soaked bedding increases the fungus troubles and impedes healing. The best bedding for real absorbancy and longer cleaner lasting conditions, is to put a layer of No. 2 dry Farmers Mix saw dust and a second layer of dry shavings. I mix cedar shavings with my dry pine shavings as a second layer in the dog truck boxes. After this two or so inches, I top with the softest dried grass. In Alaska they have a swamp grass that I found not unlike the lofty grass I found used by the Laplanders in their reindeer (caribou) mukluks as a high loft insulator. It resists matting and bounces back. Unlike straw, which breaks up, mats and looses it loft, grass or hay last longer, stays "pen. and absorbs better.

Certain snow condition? catch in the hair in and around the pads. The first clue is snow balling. The lesser irritation causes some minor abrasion and bleeding around the hair line. In the worse cases, the snow balling is inside on the bottom of the foot between the pads. This causes the pressure SPLITS. These cracks are also called FISSURES as noted above. The faster the dog runs, the more heat be dissipates through the cooling action the body uses to lower the body temperature. Most polar husky type dogs sufficiently

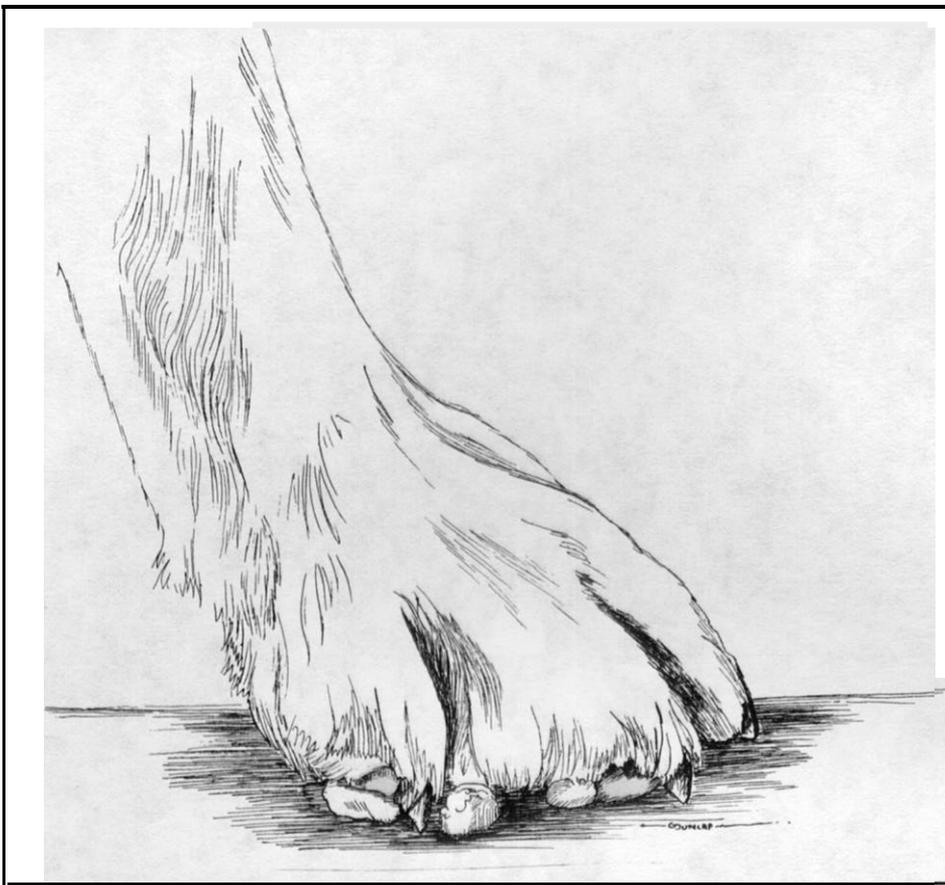


*Always examine your dogs feet as they run and certainly after each outing.*

lower their body temperature more through their tongues, then their feet, but the houndy types put more heat out through their feet. These dogs suffer the most from snow balling that leads to fissures. The moisture created by sweating feet attracts, particularly, the dry crystalline cutting type cold weather snow. This is that snow that comes during temperature around 10 degrees F., or colder. This very low moisture snow does not pack and therefore sticks to the warm feet. The polar husky type dogs usually not only have a better evolved metabolism to deal with this condition, they have been selected for more hair covering the foot.

In addition this is a better type hair for deflecting snow then you found on most hound and herding breeds or mixes. Something to think back on and consider when breeding or selecting a sled dog on a summer da;.

All dogs are subject to fissures, but the faster you go, the more heat you create and that increases the fissure potential. -Prevention is the best cure. GLYCERINE coated on the hair is a good way to inhibit snow balling. The best procedure is to take the dog out of the box and have someone hold the dog. Do not put the dog on the snow. Then coat the hair on the side and bottom of the feet. An ap-



“Snowballing” often can be seen when the snow conditions allow for the build up **of snow on** the foot. These damaging small particles that ball up, come from the moisture created by “sweating feet.” This is seen in fast running hound type dogs more often.

**KRAZY GLUE.** The area around the cut can be coated with the glue. Apply tape over the area. Most any medical tape can be used, **ELASTIKON** elastic tape is excellent. Coat the top of the tape with a layer of the glue. Corn Starch sprinkled over the area increases the bonding time. Trim the excess tape around the edges so it is round, leave no points. Use curved scissors for this step. Keep nail polish remover or acetone handy as it is the only thing that cuts through the cyanoacrylate glues. These bandage patches will often last until the area is healed.

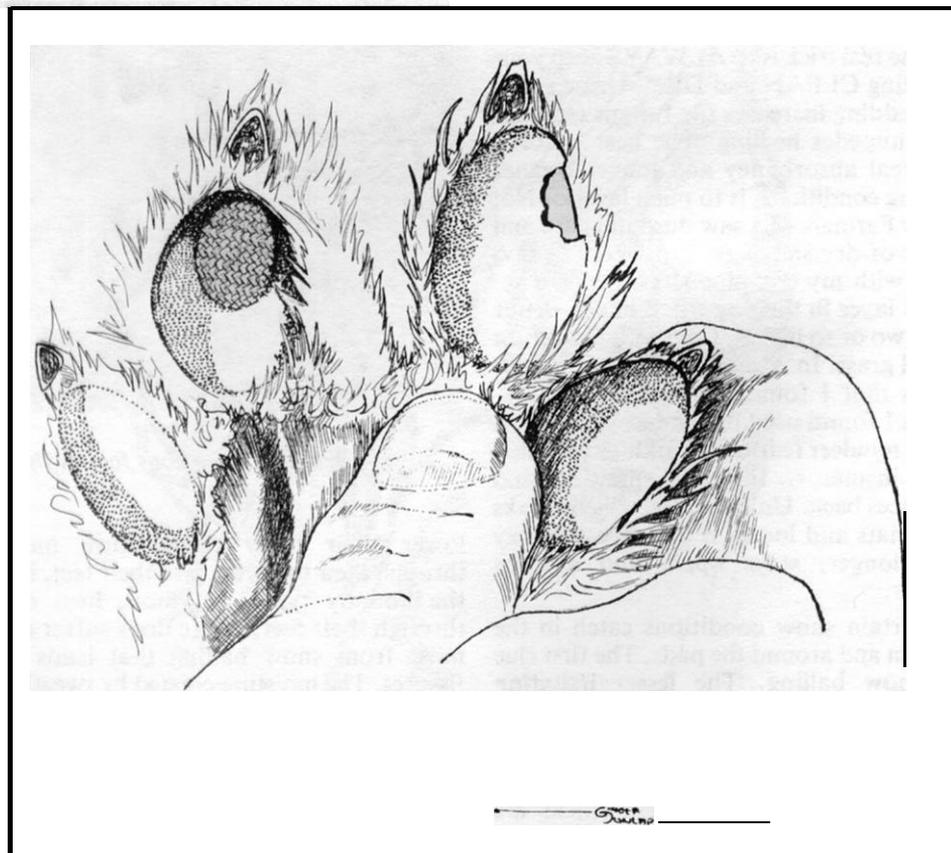
Another bandage material to use is a 3M product called **VETRAP**. A unique elastic bandage material that sticks only to itself allows you to mold a boot shaped cover. Combined with a light durable poly boot, you can cover a very sensitive pad.

However, remember, prevention is the best approach.

plicator that works well is a used plastic shampoo bottle. Use one with the recessed pop-up nipple that allows you to squeeze out a controlled amount. This works well and saves your hands from freezing. (Although my wife uses polypro gloves that act like a dauber when they get soaked with glycerine).

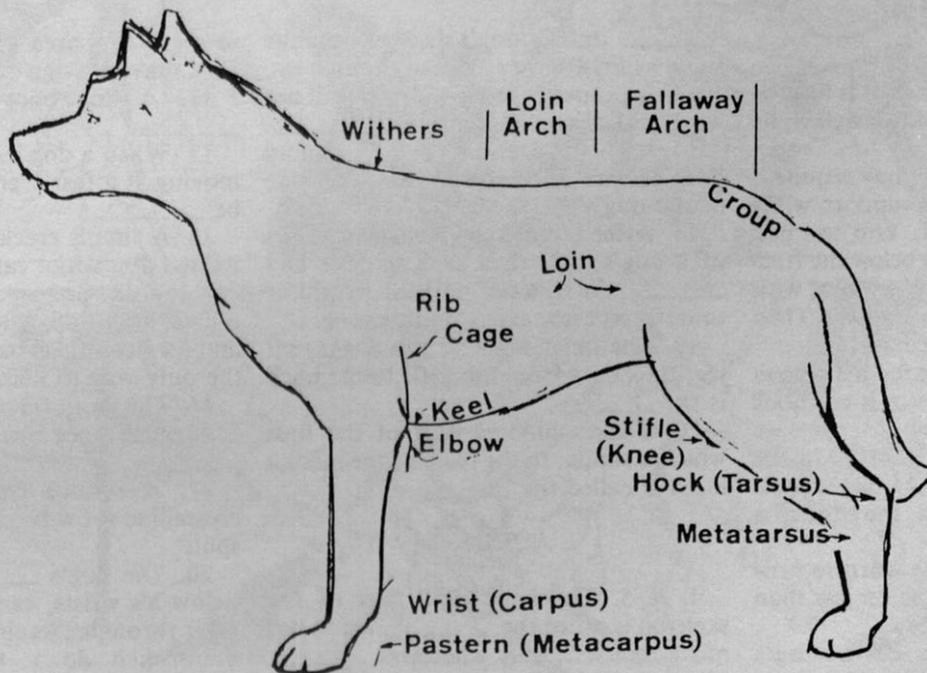
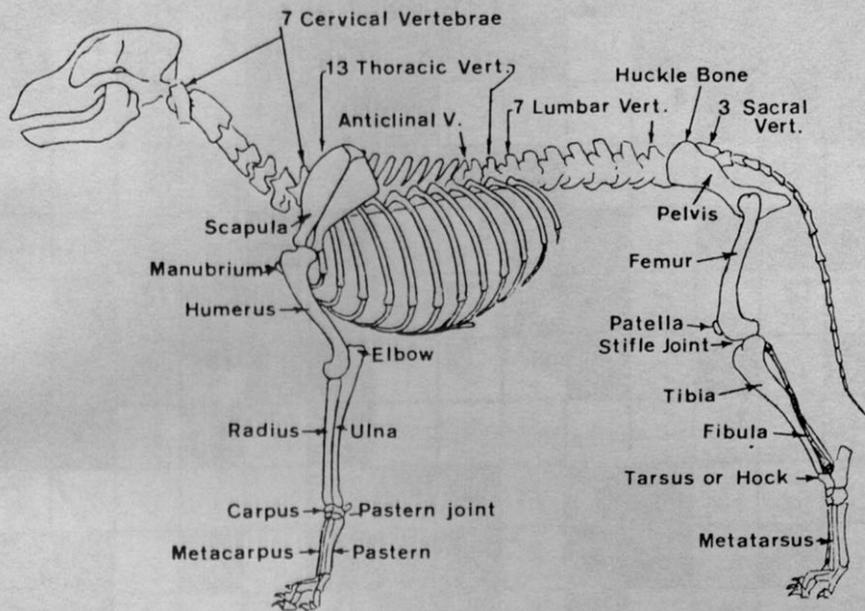
Another prevention is the “use of dog boots. Today many people make good boots. Pick someone that makes boots for a lot of racers. These people know what materials to use and how to detail the boot. For short fast runs the light weight strong polypropylene boot with velcro attaching elastic bands, is best. For longer distance, slower running, you may want to avoid the elastic as it can cut off circulation; surgical tape is a good substitute. In any case, make sure your closures is very high so you have no cuff. A cuff fills up with snow and forces the boot off, especially at the gallop. Some people like polar fleece in place of poly boots, especially for certain conditions or dogs with sore pads.

The pads are another area of concern. If a dog cuts or takes a chunk out of a pad, it can be extremely sensitive. These will heal faster if you make a patch (bandage). Indeed a patch can make a dog feel good enough that they can run with a fairly severe abrasion. A patch can be made by using glues that contain cyanoacrylate, like you find in the product called



*Pad cuts and abrasions can be best treated by making a patch or bandage for the area. Not only will the treated dog often run, but the wounded area heals faster.*

# A Closer Look



Often the parts of a dog are referred to with these bone and section names. You can use this chart the next time you hear about an area of the dog. For example, one of the more common racing injuries in sled dogs is in the PASTER area. Now you would know this involves the METACARPUS. These four bones are like our human hand. The most often broken bones during fast running are the two middle METACARPAL bones. The same bones in the back leg are called METATARSALS. Note the difference in the spelling? What area is the Tarsus also called? If you answered HOCK, you are correct.