

## The Great Serum Race – Blazing the Iditarod Trail

Debbie S. Miller

1. How did Leonhard Seppala find out that his Siberian husky, Togo, would make a great sled dog?  
Togo ran 31 miles in a blizzard with a gash in leg to find Leonhard and his dog team.
2. How would Togo be described?  
Togo was described by his owner as a rascal, but he also had great strength and determination. He was a natural leader on his team.
3. What was the first thing Dr. Welch did after discovering that several children in Nome had come down with diphtheria and later died?  
He met with the city council and recommended quarantine. All schools and public places were closed and people were told to stay in their homes.
4. Who did Dr. Welch send a radio telegram to asking for help?  
He sent a telegram to Governor Bone in Juneau, Alaska urgently requesting antitoxin serum.
5. Why did sled dog teams need to carry the serum the last 700 miles from Anchorage, Alaska?  
Trains only traveled the first 300 miles of the trip. Planes could not fly there in the winter because they had open cockpits and it was much too cold.
6. When did the twenty pound glass bottles of serum begin their journey?  
The journey began on January 26, 1925 from Anchorage. A train took it to Nenana, the closest railway link to Nome.
7. What was the temperature when the train reached Nenana? The temperature was fifty degrees below zero.
8. Who was the first of the dog sled mushers to carry the serum?  
Bill Shannon and his nine malamute dogs carried the serum the first fifty two miles.
9. What had to be done with the serum at each roadhouse between relay teams?  
The serum had to be warmed up over wood-fired stoves to keep it from freezing. If frozen, the serum would be no good.
10. What was the coldest temperature of the journey, faced by the twelfth dog sled team driven by Charlie Evans?  
It got to sixty four degrees below zero and two of Charlie's dogs died from the cold.
11. What dangers were faced by Leonhard Seppala's dog team, led by Togo?  
He decided to take the shortest route which crossed the frozen Norton Bay. The ice could break up and leave them stranded, far from the shore.
12. What happened to the serum when Gunnar Kaasen and his team, led by Balto and Fox, were on the last leg of the relay?  
A violent gust of wind turned the sled over and the serum was almost lost in the snow.
13. How long did the entire race take? It took less than six days. Twenty mushers and 160 dogs had covered 674 miles.

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14. What happened in Nome after the serum got there?

A month after the serum arrived in Nome, the epidemic was over and the quarantine was lifted.

15. Although all the dogs played an important role, which one got the most recognition?

Balto got the most recognition because he was one of the two lead dogs on the last leg of the journey and a reporter wrote about him. He has movies and books about him. There is also a statue of him in New York's Central Park.

16. How did Leonhard Seppala feel about the recognition his dogs got after the run?

Leonhard owned both Balto and Togo. He felt bad that Balto received so much recognition while Togo, the stronger leader, did not.

17. What is the name of the dog sled race that is run every year in March, commemorating the 1925 serum run?

It is called the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. It begins in Anchorage and ends in Nome, more than a thousand miles away. It is the longest sled dog race in the world. It follows some of the same route of the serum run.

18. What kind of dangers did the dogs and people face during the run?

The dogs and the people in the race/run suffered from severe cold and often the dogs legs would freeze. The dogs could also frost their lungs from breathing the extremely cold air.

19. Through what sense did the experienced dogs lead their teams?

The experienced dogs led more by smell than sight.