

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson, President

Make sure the Barkie Birkie is a part of your Birkie experience!

Barkie Birkie Skijoring Race is a part of the roster of great specialty events at the 2024 American Birkebeiner. The race is intended to be a fun race providing a great opportunity for skiers and spectators to learn more about Skijoring. It is also an opportunity for skiers and dogs to get out and ski together.

Skijoring combines cross country skiing with dog power. The skier is attached to his or her dog with a belt and towline. The dog then pulls the skier across the snow. Skijoring is a team sport which allows both human and canine counterparts to exercise and enjoy the great outdoors.

Skijoring is derived from the Norwegian work skijoring meaning ski driving. The sport has been around for hundreds of years and originally started using reindeer and wooden skis. The sport also uses horses, but dogs are now the most common animal used in skijoring.

Most medium size dogs (30 pounds and up) who are trained properly can be candidates for skijoring. There is a special harness for this sport.

The race starts at 9:00. on Thursday, February 22nd on Hayward's Main Street. There are three courses. **The 5K is for fast, experienced teams** that can finish a 5K race in 25 minutes or less. **The 3K is for teams** that can complete a 3K race in 25 minutes or less. **The 1K is for teams** new to the sport or just looking for a fun experience. Teams have 25 minutes or less to complete 1K. No awards will be given for the 1K, but all participants will receive a finisher medal.

The race starts at the intersection of Main & 2nd Street in Hayward and heads up Main Street to 6th Street. The course then turns left onto 6th Street and left onto the fields behind the Hayward Primary School.

From there a large loop circles the Hayward Golf Course. At the completion of the loop the 5K Skijorers will ski a second lap of the same loop. The 3K Skijorers will complete only one lap on the golf course. After completing the required number of laps racers retrace their route back to 6th Street, turn right on Main Street, finishing at the start area. The 1K Course will follow the same route as the other races but will turn right onto the 1K Cut-off trail shortly after entering the golf course, then right on the return trail to Main Street.

Rules include:

- Entry is limited to one person + 1 dog.
- Skijorers may ski using either skate or classic technique.
- Dogs must be treated humanely at all times.
- Dogs must be controlled and kept from other teams.
- Loose dogs are not permitted at any time.
- Aggressive dogs are prohibited from the event.

- Waste is the dog owner's responsibility and before or after the race it must be picked up immediately.
- Skate or classic skis are allowed.
- Metal ski edges are not permitted.
- Skijor belt is required and must be padded.
- Towline must use internal bungee.
- The distance between the skijorer and the dog should be between 7 feet and 10 feet.
- A pulling style dog harness is required with padding around the neck area.
- Each dog must wear a snug fitting dog collar.
- **Under no circumstances can the towline be attached to the dog's collar or any harness not specifically designed for pulling.**

Race prize sponsor is the Northern Lakes Co-op Feed Mill. This race is limited to 150 teams. Registration fee is \$50 or \$60 after February 19 and all the proceeds will go the area's Northwoods Humane Society. Skiers must be at least 13 years old. To register for this race and for more information go the www.birkie.com.

If you haven't seen this event – please, put it on your schedule. The dogs love it, the skiers love it and the viewers love it. Our thanks to Connie Meek and Ginny Chabek, both NHS members, who spearhead this event and to the great Birkie staff and volunteers!

As I write this article, the challenges of 'no snow' will alter some of the plans. So please check the American Birkebeiner website for updated plans for the Barkie Birkie and other events

Dates to save:

February 22 – 9:00 a.m -.Barkie Birkie – Main Street – Hayward

BINGO AT POWELLS – March 14 and 28, April 11 and 25, May 9 – starts at 6 pm