



The work was hard, the loads often heavy, and the going sometimes treacherous. Winter dog trips certainly could be lonesome and long, often covering several hundred miles. Wise was the force which painstakingly set out directives about what equipment was essential for a winter dog trip as the RNWMP did. Sledmasters were told that: "Close attention should be paid to keeping down weight, nothing should be carried but what is actually necessary; this is important."¹⁸ Bacon was a staple, but with the "... rind taken

off to save weight." Moreover: "Before starting, men should learn to bake bannock [an often unleavened bread of oat or barley flour baked in flat loaves] which can be done in the evening at the camp fire, and sufficient made to last over the following day."¹⁹

In the RNWMP a 'normal' winter dog trip would require 99 pounds of axes, bedding, robes, knives and utensils in addition to each man's personal clothing. There was also a host of provisions, dog food and pemmican, medicines and a diary with a "... flexible waterproof cover" which attests to the prospective rigors of the trips.²⁰

The Alberta Provincial Police also called its sled dogs 'train' or 'sleigh' dogs. The force's 1924 *Annual Report* noted that "Our train dogs at Fort Vermilion have been worked very hard up to the present. From last reports, they are in good shape to carry out winter patrols in the district."²¹ These dogs were the only means of winter transportation in that part of the province.

The Alberta Provincial Police closed out its Fort Vermilion sled-dog program in 1930, selling all five dogs, just as it did its bloodhound corps.²² Two years later, the Alberta Provincial Police was amalgamated into the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, as were the responsibilities and personnel of five other provincial forces across Canada.

18. Royal Northwest Mounted Police, *Rules and Regulations*, Office of the Commissioner, October 1, 1909, p. 225.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-226.

21. Alberta Provincial Police, *Annual Report — 1924*, p. 73.

22. Alberta Provincial Police, *Annual Report — 1930*, p. 67.