Results

OSU received its special runs in July 2010. Delivery to the research site north of Anchorage went smoothly, as did the OSU’s installations of the runs. Mason’s kennels are purposefully designed – even the unique ones – to be easy to set up.

The runs have performed as promised, even under the harsh conditions of the environmental chambers. They have also met their expectation of being easy to disassemble for cleaning, and their components can frequently be seen in the back of pick-up trucks going through car washes in the northern suburbs of Anchorage. Best of all, the runs also came in on budget.

“Runs work great, no complaints,” Dr. Davis said. “Vinyl coating on the floors has held up in the single digit temps without any cracking so far, and they are easy enough to clean that we use them to store all our equipment between studies.”
Background

Oklahoma State University (“OSU”) is a leading research institution whose departments of Physiological Sciences is studying how sled dogs perform incredible feats of endurance. OSU has developed a research facility near Anchorage, Alaska where an environmental chamber is used to study and measure dogs’ metabolic reactions to exercise and climate change. In particular, how a sled dog’s muscles and cellular metabolism are different from ours, and how they differ from human afflictions such as obesity and type-2 diabetes.

To adequately conduct its studies, OSU needed to identify a kennel manufacturer able to design and build the specialized kennel systems required for its research and the unique constraints of its location.

Dr. Michael Davis is the Director of the Comparative Physiology Laboratory at OSU’s Center for Veterinary Health Services and the professor in charge of the research. In 2000, Dr. Davis was selected by the Alaska’s famed Iditarod race committee to help improve the health and wellbeing of the race’s sled dogs (primarily Siberian Huskies). Dr. Davis became interested in how sled dogs can exert themselves at such high levels for such extended periods of time yet recover so quickly. Dr. Davis eventually ran his Iditarod sled dogs in endurance races lasting over 1,000 miles in 2008 and 2010.

Solution

Mason’s sales consultants followed up on OSU’s request for design and quoting fees, and spent time with the professors to reach an agreement. They spent time with them to understand the unique needs of the research facility and the constraints of the environmental chamber. Mason’s engineering department subsequently became involved and began developing design ideas to address the constraints.

Identifying Mason as the right fit, Mason then visited the Iditarod kennel site, where they worked to identify a design and manufacturing partner who could handle the project. While being open to working with any firm, OSU had already partnered with the Mason Company for several years with very positive experiences.

"Mason’s people and its products exceed my expectations... They treated us like we were the biggest order of the year..." – Dr. Davis

Mason’s engineers were able to invest the time and effort with OSU because of Mason’s unique ability to develop custom equipment. Mason manufactures everything in the United States; it does not import equipment from Asia. Its highly trained and experienced workforce can immediately make runs in standard sizes and with standard features, but can also manufacture unique or highly specialized equipment. Mason’s philosophy is that kennel runs should fit a facilities footprint and constraints—not the other way around.

"Mason's sales consultants followed up on OSU's request for design and quoting fees, and spent time with the professors to reach an agreement. They spent time with them to understand the unique needs of the research facility and the constraints of the environmental chamber. Mason's engineering department subsequently became involved and began developing design ideas to address the constraints. Interestingly, the first box design ideas were ultimately discarded, and it was done through an iterative process of trial and error that the final working model was established. It was a collaborative partnership, and the result is that Mason had simply pushed an off-the-shelf or "good enough" solution rather than investing the time and effort to develop the correct one.

Mason was able to invest the time and effort with OSU because of Mason’s unique ability to develop custom equipment. Mason manufactures everything in the United States; it does not import equipment from Asia. Its highly trained and experienced workforce can immediately make runs in standard sizes and with standard features, but can also manufacture unique or highly specialized equipment. Mason’s philosophy is that kennel runs should fit a facilities footprint and constraints—not the other way around.

Due to its unique manufacturing capability, Mason also has the culture and customer service to handle customized requests. As Dr. Davis experienced, anyone can promise to provide excellent service while promoting at a trade show. The question is how the firm will respond after the show.

"Mason’s people and its products exceed my expectations... They treated us like we were the biggest order of the year..." – Dr. Davis

Dr. Davis was initially interested in how sled dogs can exert themselves at such high levels for such extended periods of time yet recover so quickly. The site in Anchorage, Alaska was an environmental chamber that would have temperatures down to -20 degrees Fahrenheit for up to 96 straight hours in order to replicate the Alaskan winter. The kennel runs also needed to be space efficient because the chamber is of limited size. They needed removable Mongolian tents for collecting and cleaning waste. The kennel runs also had to be quickly disassembled for cleaning because the environmental chamber didn’t have running water. Instead of using hoses to clean the runs, OSU developed a strategy to clean the kennels by taking them apart and running them through a car wash in a nearby town.

After developing the outline of what they needed for the kennels, an OSU team member visited an animal care trade show to walk the exhibit halls, visit with various kennel manufacturers and acquire a feel for their products and services. The goal was to identify a design and manufacturing partner who could– and would– work with OSU’s USL solve their unique needs. Several kennel manufacturers at the trade shows responded that they were interested; exchanged business cards and promised to follow up. Upon returning from the trade show OSU contacted the various manufacturers to begin the process of designing and quoting the equipment. Mason Company was the only firm to respond.

"I expected great customer service and I wasn't getting it when I was wearing a shirt," said Dr. Davis. "I made me wonder what the customer service would be like if something ever went wrong down the road."

The sales representative of the firm was Dr. Davis, and the firm was Mason Equipment Company. He called Dr. Davis and set up an appointment to come see the facilities. Dr. Davis, who was looking for a kennel manufacturer able to design and build the specialized kennel systems required for its research and the unique constraints of its location, was impressed by Mason's sales representatives. They treated him like the biggest order of the year. They also showed passion and ingenuity as we worked our way towards a final design. The runs have performed great," Dr. Davis said.

Challenge

Physiology Laboratory at OSU's Center for Veterinary the unique constraints of its location. specialized kennel systems required for its research and kennel manufacturer able to design and build the kennels at the site in Alaska. The specifications were demanding. The equipment Mason Company needed to be especially durable because the environmental chamber would have temperatures down to -20 degrees Fahrenheit for up to 96 straight days in order to replicate the Alaskan winter. The kennel runs also needed to be space efficient because the chamber is of limited size. They needed removable Mongolian tents for collecting and cleaning waste. The kennel runs also had to be quickly disassembled for cleaning because the environmental chamber didn’t have running water. Instead of using hoses to clean the runs, OSU developed a strategy to clean the kennels by taking them apart and running them through a car wash in a nearby town.

After developing the outline of what they needed for the kennels, an OSU team member visited an animal care trade show to walk the exhibit halls, visit with various kennel manufacturers and acquire a feel for their products and services. The goal was to identify a design and manufacturing partner who could– and would– work with OSU’s USL solve their unique needs. Several kennel manufacturers at the trade shows responded that they were interested; exchanged business cards and promised to follow up. Upon returning from the trade show OSU contacted the various manufacturers to begin the process of designing and quoting the equipment. Mason Company was the only firm to respond.

"I expected great customer service and I wasn't getting it when I was wearing a shirt," said Dr. Davis. "I made me wonder what the customer service would be like if something ever went wrong down the road."

The sales representative of the firm was Dr. Davis, and the firm was Mason Equipment Company. He called Dr. Davis and set up an appointment to come see the facilities. Dr. Davis, who was looking for a kennel manufacturer able to design and build the specialized kennel systems required for its research and the unique constraints of its location, was impressed by Mason's sales representatives. They treated him like the biggest order of the year. They also showed passion and ingenuity as we worked our way towards a final design. The runs have performed great," Dr. Davis said.