

We have been getting questions lately about our grooming practices. Here's some information about early season grooming - straight from our groomers!

**Q: Why are my favourite trails not groomed more often?**

- Grooming in the early season under “low snow conditions” is a challenge. Unlike the past few seasons, this season has given us the more typical early season, low snow conditions.
- Grooming is a very complex process. Many factors go into the decision about what to groom and when. It is part art, part science and sometimes just pure guesswork!
- In the early season, we don't have enough snow to use our Pisten Bully machines, so we need to tow equipment with snowmobiles. It takes 4 times longer to groom this way than with the Pisten Bullys and usually requires two people instead of just one person.
- This is partly why, in early season, we focus on a smaller part of the network. To try to keep everyone skiing as much as possible, we prioritize the trails that most people can ski (e.g green, blue and dog-accessible trails). You can see the priority trails in our grooming procedures ([link](#)).

**Q: It just snowed - why was this trail not groomed last night?**

- Whitehorse has very specific weather and snow conditions compared to other clubs in Canada. We often work with a low snowpack in fairly cold temperatures (-10 and colder) and with old snow. This makes the snow surface very hard. Snowmobile groomers can not break hard snow enough to set a decent track, even when we get 1 or 2 cm of fresh snow. Typically, we need more snow than that.
- Because we are in a dry climate, our snow is dry so when it's packed (compacted) 5 cm of snow turns into 1 cm of packed snow. This means that it takes a long time to build up a good base.
- The groomers we tow behind our snowmobiles are rigid and made out of 400lb of steel. On bumpy trails in low snow conditions, these bounce and bring dirt into the snowpack. The more we groom bumpy trails, the more dirt comes up. This impacts the skiing for the rest of the season, even if more snow falls. Dirt is not our friend! It worsens ski conditions and can even damage our equipment.
- Some trails, like Selwyn's Loop are a groomers' dream. The surface of the trail itself is very even, without rocks, boulders or rollers. Trails like this are much easier to groom in low snow conditions. Other trails, like WC 10K or Poweline are the opposite - we need quite a bit of snow on these trails to avoid having problems.
- Grooming bumpy trails in low snow conditions is hard on our equipment and can even damage or disable it. Damaged equipment further limits our ability to groom.
- If there is more snow in the immediate forecast, we would rather let it all fall and then groom it (if enough has fallen), rather than spend precious volunteer time and effort to groom during the snowfall event.

**Q: So when can groomers start using the Pisten Bullys?**

- We take them out as early as possible, considering the snowpack, whether they will bring up dirt and whether they might get damaged. But in an average year, they come into use on a regular basis after Christmas. For the groomers, the best Christmas gift is a nice thick snowpack!