

Dogs tested in mountains



Training safety officer Matt Gunn, of Wanaka, with his dog Rocket during an avalanche rescue exercise. Weekend blizzards in the mountains above the Cardrona Valley provided avalanche search dogs and their handlers with ideal conditions in which to test their abilities.

Search teams are tested annually by New Zealand Land Search and Rescue and acting national training co-ordinator Fritz van Rooden said

this year all 20 dogs put through their paces at the Cardrona Ski Resort and Snow Farm passed. The test scenario had an avalanche sweep through a popular ski run leaving an unknown number of people buried.

Mr van Rooden said search dog teams were considered the fastest way to locate buried victims, who generally had only minutes to live.

PHOTO: RMG VAN ROODEN