

Wanaka Sun 4/8/11

On the pulse

Aspiring Avalanche dog handlers will be safer on the mountains this winter thanks to four new state-of-the-art Snow Pulse avalanche airbags. The life-saving backpacks were funded by a Lottery grant and were given at cost by local mountain guide Davie Robinson. In the event of an avalanche, the user pulls a handle on the backpack, inflating the airbag in three seconds. The inflated airbag lifts the avalanche victim to the surface of a slide and helps protect the wearer from trauma to the head, spine, and chest. "We have been interested in these bags for a while. It is very exciting to be able to get four units, as this is a key piece of safety equipment," Aspiring Avalanche dog handler Matt Gunn said. A Swiss case study showed when the airbag was deployed in an avalanche there was a 98 percent chance of survival, the rate of survival dropped to 52 percent with a transceiver, but without the airbag.



Aspiring Avalanche dog handler Matt Gunn, mountain guide Davie Robinson and avalanche dog Rocket.

PHOTO: CHARLOTTE TRUNDLE