

# Search dog ready to learn new tricks

The News 8-12-11

BY CRIS JOHNSTON

TEN-WEEK-OLD Labrador pup Zeffer has big shoes (paws) to fill.

The Hokitika-bred dog is the latest recruit for Aspiring Avalanche Dogs (AAD) and was officially welcomed into the team last week.

Zeffer has been bought for AAD handler Callum Grant whose previous dog Zeppelin, also a Labrador, was shot and killed after wandering on to a Wanaka farm last month.

The new pup was bred by Duncan Hamilton, of Hokitika, and comes from a long line of animals working for NZ LandsAR and the police.

"The parents, Charlie and Baxter, are targeted for their drive and suitability for this kind of work," AAD founder Matt Gunn said last week.

Two litter mates were destined to work in drug detection while others were wilderness search dogs.

Mr Grant said Zeffer had been chosen because he was the "biggest and boldest" of his litter.

Training of the new dog would begin slowly and it was expected he would gain operational status for the 2013 winter season.

Zeffer and Mr Grant would be based at the Treble Cone



**Mates:** Aspiring Avalanche Dogs members Callum Grant (left) and Matt Gunn welcomed a new canine team member, 10-week-old Labrador Zeffer, into the fold last week.

PHOTO: CRIS JOHNSTON

ski field with the other three AAD team members — Mr Gunn and collie cross Rocket, Brendan Kearns and Labrador Millie and Andy Wardell and Labrador-German short-haired pointer cross Tuki.

Mr Gunn said the loss of Zeppelin was a tragic setback for the volunteer organisa-

tion.

"Zeppelin was not just a search dog — he was a pretty standout dog. It was a huge operational blow for us."

Mr Grant said he was in Wellington when the incident happened.

"Zep was being looked after by friends, but escaped

and wandered on to a farmer's land," he said.

"It was a very unfortunate series of events, but we bear no hard feelings."

Zeppelin's death was a poignant reminder to dog owners to ensure they always had control over their animals, Mr Gunn said.

"This was a highly-trained dog and one of the best search and rescue dogs in New Zealand. It is in every dog's nature to roam and it is the owner's responsibility to secure them.

"We are just looking forward now — its onwards and upwards for us."

## Fundraiser to help cover cost of AAD pup

BY CRIS JOHNSTON

HE has barely found his feet, but 10-week-old future avalanche search dog Zeffer will be the star of his own fundraising function "A Black Dog Night" tomorrow night.

Volunteer organisation Aspiring Avalanche Dogs (AAD) has organised the event to cover the costs of buying the purebred Labrador pup for its handler Callum Grant.

AAD founder Matt Gunn said the dog had a \$1000 price tag.

Although Zeffer would become part of the Treble Cone-based search organisation, all dogs were owned by their handlers.

Tomorrow's event is being held at the Federal Diner in Helwick St from 6pm. It will feature live music and a no-reserve auction. Tickets (\$20) are available at the door.