

# User ignorance could threaten pass access

Three dogs have been hit by cars in past few weeks.

*By Clark Forster*

Skiers with dogs are urged to use leashes while skiing on Teton Pass after three dogs were hit by vehicles in recent weeks.

Teton Pass Ambassador Jay Pistono said two dogs were hit just before Thanksgiving, and another dog was hit last week.

“There’s been three dogs that have been hit this year that were here with an eyewitness,” Pistono said.

“There’s just this little lazy tendency for people not to be leashing their dogs when they get out of the car. It makes it tough on the owners and the commuters.” he said.

Pistono said he knows two of the dogs survived the accidents, but the ambassador is fearful irresponsible actions by a few might lead to dire consequences for others.

“If there was a really serious accident, because someone was avoiding a dog, you could bet there would be a significant closure,” Pistono said.

If an accident on the pass were to be caused by a backcountry user, Pistono said, the Wyoming Department of Transportation would conduct an investigation and the pass would likely see a temporary closure.

“The consequences are sort of dependent on how serious the accident is and how responsible the owner is,” Pistono said. “They would close off those access areas. Which is fair enough.”

WYDOT spokesperson Stephanie Harsha said that if a user-related accident were to take place on the pass, the department would evaluate the incident and take appropriate action.

She said closures have rarely happened in the past but that WYDOT does have the authority to close access areas if there are safety concerns.

Pistono said unleashed dogs are just a recent example of ignorance by an extremely small percentage of backcountry skiers, most of whom were not locals.

The ambassador has four main bullet points he likes to stress to skiers before making their turns off the pass.

“First and foremost is to work with the enforcement agencies,” he said. “Second is to take care of your pet in all respects. The third thing is to carpool as much as possible and park tight when you’re up here. And the fourth one is to ride with respect and humility. If people just did those four things, it would really take care of a lot of the issues that threaten our access up here.”

