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To: bill w.
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I'll have more stories by next week, Hunter is doing great he's a real ham, He's on tv on monday. Jim Moss



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On the trail of mold

By Kristin McAllister, JournalNews

While debate is ongoing regarding the health effects of mold, a Southwest

Ohio company has incorporated the latest science into tracking the icky,

black, smelly stuff - Hunter, the mold-detecting dog.

Hunter, a 11/2-year-old Border Collie, is the newest weapon in finding and

remediating mold at Cincinnati-based Moss Restoration Services, a mold

assessment and remediation company.

Owner Jim Moss began his business in 1986, taking on jobs that mostly

entailed fire and flood-damaged homes.

"And then I got more and more involved in environmental-type cleanup - pigeon

droppings, sewage, things like that. With the public awareness of mold, the

mold issue became greater and the business just grew bigger and bigger. Now

that's all we do," he said.

Moss is the only certified mold loss prevention specialist in the state.

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"There are only 40 in the country," he said, adding that he also is the only person within the region to be developing a business that provides consulting services to contractors for mold detection.

Additionally, Moss is one of only 150 certified indoor environmentalists in the country.

Moss' company not only provides consulting services for contractors, architects and home buyers, it also provides education regarding mold loss prevention - showing how not to get mold - and environmental assessment and remediation.

Enter Hunter.

"Obviously, if you can see mold, you've got it. But it's the stuff you can't see that Hunter picks up," he said. "He does a great job."

Moss acquired Hunter three weeks ago for \$10,000 from a Florida canine training school.

"He was on doggie death row when somebody from the ... Safety Harbor dog pound recognized that he's one of the kind of dogs they want for the Florida K-9 Academy," he said. "He was trained exactly the same as a drug dog, only for mold detection."

That was in September. Now, just three weeks into the job, Hunter already has earned respect within the industry.

"We've been out on three jobs so far and it's been just great," Moss said. "I was probably the biggest skeptic."

He was a skeptic, that is, until he said he saw Hunter in action his second day on the job when he brought Hunter with him to a contractor's facility.

"I just got him and hadn't even worked with him yet and thought, what the⁸heck, I'll just give him a try, so I gave the command for him to find the

mold and within two minutes he found the mold," he said "He found five areas

that nobody knew existed and needed to be found."

Moss isn't the only fan of Hunter.

Brian Hogg, vice president of Owens Corning Basement Finishing Systems, and Scott Kranz, president of the Cincinnati-based restoration company, said they think Moss is onto something big.

"It's a great idea," Hogg said. "He does great work."

Hogg and Kranz said that in addition to calling a mold assessor, there are several things homeowners may do to avoid mold contamination.

"There are a couple of things you have in place for mold to form - moisture⁹s one, and the food source for the molds and mildews - any type of natural material - is the other," Kranz said. "Some of it is inherent because of the way the house has been built. They're so much tighter now. You have to find out if it allows venting, especially when cooking or with the shower."

He said, houses historically "breathed more. Now, moisture is actually⁷etting trapped."

If a homeowner runs into trouble and requires restoration, Kranz and Hogg are ready to provide help with an anti-mold product.

"It's a prefabricated wall system and it gets directly to the foundation, not using wood studs or anything," Hogg said. "With this product, it's easy to repair. It's a process of a matter of minutes in which you can remove the wall, find out what the issue is, repair it and put it back in."

Kranz said their product, which has been designed and engineered specifically for below-grade basements, is particularly helpful for people with a variety of health issues.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, symptoms of sensitivity to exposure to molds range from nasal stuffiness all the way to lung infection for some with chronic illness.

The 2002 CDC State of the Science on Molds and Human Health report indicates

that there are "more than 1,000 different kinds of indoor molds ... in

(United States) homes," stimulated by "warm, damp, and humid conditions."

Moss agrees that moisture is the key culprit.

"The biggest enemy is water in a house. The biggest friend to a house is a good roof, good gutter and good drainage," Moss said. "Water's the enemy."

His advice to avoid the development of mold?

"If dripping occurs in a pipe under the sink - fix it, a leaking toilet - fix it, a dripping gutter - fix it, windows that leak - fix it," he said.

But if there is unseen mold to be found, Hunter's the one for the job. With

more than 600 hours of training under his collar, Hunter is the 11th canine

trained in mold detection nationwide.

Moss said Hunter's mold detection skills run anywhere from about \$299 to \$499

for a standard home test and report.

"Remediation costs can vary from about \$600 as the bottom line, to the sky's

the limit. It just depends on the job," Moss said. "But the average is about

\$5,000

"I'm real satisfied," Moss said. "As far as I was concerned, he was the best in his class."

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