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Man's Best Friend is Mold's Worst Enemy

By David Zuckerman.

It could be cocaine or peanut butter -- it just doesn't matter: Properly trained, Bill Whitstine says, a dog can find anything. Whitstine runs the Florida Canine Academy. He's trained thousands of dogs for police work, search and rescue, and myriad other public safety jobs.

Now he's training dogs to find mold. Remediation, Whitstine says, may never be the same.

For contractors faced with mold litigation, experts say remediation is the answer. But the process can require months of searching and testing, costing thousands of dollars.

Enter the mold dog. Proponents say dogs can quickly and reliably find hidden mold, eliminating the need for costly, destructive searching and unnecessary testing.

The MoldDog division of Whitstine's academy has trained 16 dogs that work in states from Oregon to Florida. He hopes to graduate 100 more by next year.

Mold Detectives, of Sacramento, Calif., runs a Whitstine-trained mold dog named Sydney. Company president Russ Colliau says Sydney changed the way he does business. Air tests can only determine the presence of mold in a house, Colliau says, not its location. "With Sydney, we find each area right up front and do only one round of testing. It's limiting testing expenses and bringing the expense to the client way down."

Trade-Winds, an environmental services company in Bay Shore, N.Y., trained three mold dogs with help from local police. Trade-Winds president Michael O'Reilly says dogs are better than the best detection instruments. Trade-Winds dogs once saved a whole house that several remediations failed to clear.

"The contractor was ready to bulldoze the house to avoid litigation," O'Reilly says. In five minutes, he says, the dogs found a small patch of mold behind an air duct that was distributing spores throughout the house.

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For more information, including where to find a mold dog, go to www.mold-dog.com or call (800) MOLD-DOG.

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