

Sunday, May 25, 2003

# THE HUTCHINSON NEWS

online edition

[Lottery Numbers](#)[Newspaper in Education](#)[Community Page](#)[Subscribe](#)[Search](#)**FRONT PAGE****LOCAL****REGIONAL****OPINION****OBITUARIES****SPORTS****AD ASTRA****BIZ & AG****Ag Briefs****Oil****Completions****Business****Briefs****Business****People****Building****Permits****Food****Inspections****CLASSIFIED****PAST ISSUES****CONTACT US**[Available carrier routes](#)[Printer friendly page](#)[Send this page to a friend](#)

## Mold Sniffer

### Hutch company's four-legged fungus detective helping boost business

By [Jim Misunas](#)

Mike Lamunyon's business began in window cleaning, moved into janitorial services and eventually morphed into Lamunyon Cleaning and Restoration.

When Lamunyon added a dog to the payroll, it was his latest attempt to stay ahead of the times.

Lamunyon's dog "Zero," isn't an ordinary pooch. He's a part Labrador trained to discover mold and point it out to his owners with his snout. Similarly trained dogs are used by pest agencies to find termites or by police departments to discover drugs and accelerants.

Lamunyon has discovered that Zero is a valuable detective in ferreting out mold for his company's mold remediation service. Allergic reactions to mold often start with sneezing, coughing or watery eyes, but severe reactions can lead to respiratory problems and loss of memory.

"The mold remediation and air quality business has gotten more popular," Lamunyon said. "Maintaining air quality has become a more important health issue."

Mold is a symptom of water that gives popular mold species such as cladosporium and stachybotrys a way to thrive, Lamunyon stated.

"What has happened in building techniques is all those spaces where air used to flow are now closed up," he said. "The way things are built contribute to moisture problems. You can't ignore water inside a building like you used to."

After several months on the job, Zero has passed inspection with flying colors. Trainer Jonathan Lamunyon can guide Zero into a building, where he will detect mold inside air ducts, crawl spaces and behind sheet rock. Zero's findings are often confirmed by scientific evidence gathered by taking air samples. Zero starts searching on command and will sit down when he senses mold with his sensitive nose. On command, he'll point in the direction of the mold. He's rewarded with tasty dog treats.

"We've done inspections before and people will forget about water damage that might have happened years ago," Jonathan said.

"I've found Zero's really accurate finding the mold. What's nice is we can take Zero in and do an inspection to pinpoint where the mold might be growing. The combination of human and dog input gives us a more unbiased opinion. Once we take the mold out, we'll test the area again by taking air samples."

Zero came with a price tag exceeding several thousand dollars, according to his new owners. The Lamunyons signed a contract to buy a mold dog before they traveled to Florida this past winter. Real estate and law firms have also begun employing the dogs as mold detectives.

"I'm still amazed by these dogs that can be trained on finding substances like mold," Mike Lamunyon said.

"But we definitely thought a dog could help us with our original inspections. He's already saved us time and money by pinpointing exactly where trouble spots exist."

All this from an animal rescued from an animal shelter in Florida.

"Zero has gone from a dog living in a humane shelter to a working dog with a great home," Jonathan said. "By combining that human and animal element, it's the best of both worlds. Zero enables us to do our job better than we used to."

Reporter Jim Misunas can be reached at [jmisunas@hutchnews.com](mailto:jmisunas@hutchnews.com), or by calling (620) 694-5700, ext. 315.

[Copyright 2003 The Hutchinson News](#)