

LAS VEGAS WEEKLY

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Get Charles Grodin on the Phone, We Have the Plot for Beethoven III: Cute Dog vs. Evil Fungus!

In a pristinely clean house near Summerlin, Trace, a scraggly, high-strung Jack Russell Terrier, is furiously sniffing her way around cabinets, sinks and floor tiles, searching for the smell that brings her to her haunches.

"The dog is trained to go to source, or to go to concentrations of particular smells. It works just like bombs or drugs," explains Tovey Giezentanner, public-relations director for MoldDog. The Florida-based company has trained 20 dogs across the country, who are now working in the fungal trenches. Trace is the first to hit Las Vegas, accompanied by her owner and trainer Erik Lundgaard, who recently began the company MoldSniffers, with the motto "We have a Nose for Mold."



In her two years, the pup has had a kind of rags-to-riches life. She was adopted from a Florida Humane Society and treated to 1,000 hours of training to pinpoint 18 different species of mold. That brought the 12-pound fur ball's asking price up to \$12,500, which Lundgaard hopes to quickly make back by charging \$295 (that's a limited-time special, down from the standard \$395) per inspection.

Today, we're here to see whether the training pays off. Trace starts in the living room. Quickly sniffs her way to the kitchen, rounds the cabinets, her nails scraping against the tile as Lundgaard holds her back from the pace she'd like to go, and then she sits in front of the sink.

"Good girl," her owner and trainer says, reaching into a fanny pack to hand her some kibble.