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June 13, 2003

Got Mold? - 'Jack' terrier has the nose for the mold

Mold is a growing problem because home inspectors say it can hurt you even when you can't see it.

But what people can't see, dogs can sniff out.

KATU's 2 On Your Side reporter Ed Teachout puts the Northwest's first mold sniffing dog to the test.



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Fear about the health impacts of mold is creating a big business for mold inspectors.

When you're searching for something you seldom see, costs to find it can skyrocket. But now there's a new inspector in town who's motive isn't money, it's attention.

Jack and his owner Eric Johnson from Common Scents Inspections are on patrol sniffing for what many homeowners fear will make them sick - mold.

Though Maggie Maher says she feels fine in her home but she's still worried about mold.

When she was set to hire an inspector until she started shopping around and noticed an inspector that fit her budget instead of break it.

"One guy was going to charge me \$1,700 for the inspection," exclaimed Maggie.

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Current Conditions

Temperature: 66°F

Wind: 2 MPH E

Barometer: 30.08

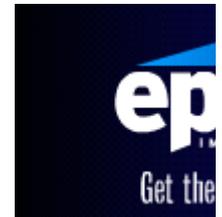
Rainfall: 0.00 inches

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What she found was Jack, who is the first mold-sniffing dog in Portland and KATU wanted to test how well he finds the unwanted spores.

But sniffing out mold in cabinets can be rigged so 2 On Your Side put Jack, a Jack Russell dog, born with only one eye to the test.

"He's indicating there's the presence of mold in this area," said Eric.

Underneath the carpet Jack uncovers a black stain around a crack in the floor of the test house.

"This black stain along the edges is probably old growth from an old mold colony," said Eric.

The homeowner said it's the exact spot an old water heater leaked about a year and a half ago.

Over a thousand hours of training helped teach Jack to seek out any kind of mold, even dead spores.

"If he tells you there's mold there you can virtually be assured there's mold," said Eric.

Discovering that dead mold isn't a problem for Jack, he assured Maher that her home is safe.

Jack went to mold sniffing school in Florida.

His owner said the training is so intense that more than half the canines that compete wash out before they become certified as a mold sniffing dog.



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