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**Monday, August 4**

## Dogs find mold

*By Jeff Ostrowski, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer*  
Monday, August 4, 2003

The menace of toxic mold has spawned a cottage industry. The newest niche: Companies are training dogs to sniff out vicious strains of fungus.

Miami-based Mold Detection Services recently adopted two dogs, Snickers and Tootsie, from the local Humane Society, then spent \$15,000 to train and certify them.

Snickers and Tootsie learned to identify 18 types of toxic mold, including stachybotrys and aspergillus, Mold Detection Services co-owner David Leshner says.

The company sells its services to homeowners. For \$495 for a 2,000-square-foot home, Leshner samples air with mold-detection devices and directs Snickers and Tootsie to sniff around.

Mold skeptics note few guidelines regulate what's an unsafe level of mold, or even how to find it.

"The dog might detect mold in quantities so that the average human might not even react to," says Robert Hartwig, chief economist for the industry-run Insurance Information Institute.

Still, Hartwig adds, the dogs might make it easier to find mold hidden in drywall or under floors, and therefore reduce repair bills.

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