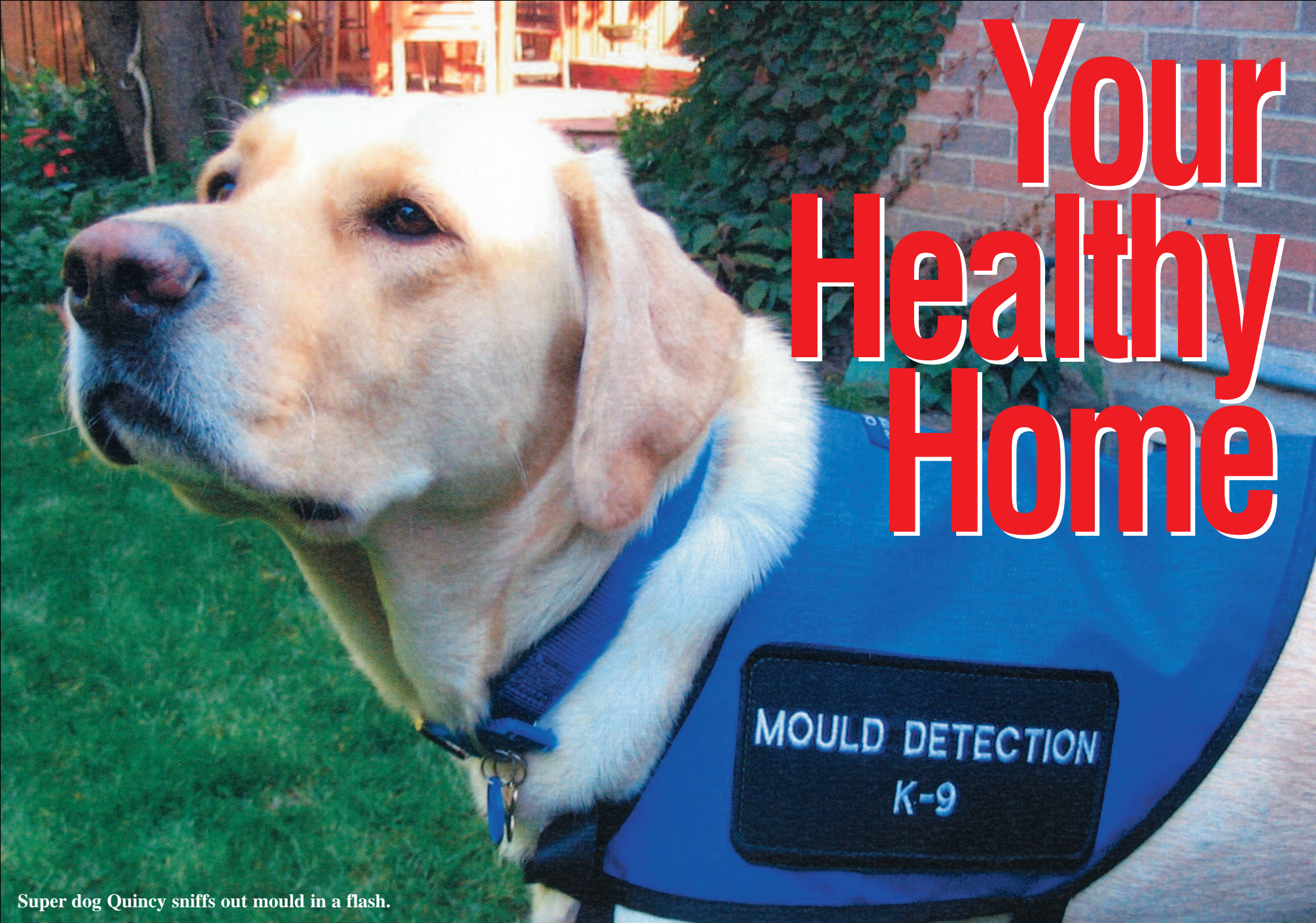


Your Healthy Home



Super dog Quincy sniffs out mould in a flash.

Photo courtesy of Haverkate & Associates

Mould dog sniffs out invisible household hazard

When it comes to tools for indoor environmental testing, Quincy breaks the mould.

The two-year-old yellow lab, owned by Toronto-based Haverkate & Associates, is Canada's first mould-detection dog. Quincy, trained using the same methods used for arson dogs, bomb and drug detection dogs, can identify where mould is growing in a home, school or business.

"Quincy can pinpoint the exact location where mould is growing, cheaper and faster than any other tool we have available to us," says Frank Haverkate, president of Haverkate & Associates, which provides indoor air quality testing and specializes in indoor mould inspections in the GTA.

Mould is often difficult to find, as it grows inside wall cavities, underneath floors and other inaccessible areas. Moisture building up from leaky pipes, roofs and basements and high humidity create ideal growing conditions for mould and the spores can easily become airborne. Exposure to some types of moulds can cause problems such as respiratory infections, asthma attacks, skin rashes, eye and ear infections, nose bleeds and headaches. In rare cases, toxic mould can cause cancer or death. Quincy received more than 1000 hours of train-

ing at the Florida Canine Academy to learn to discriminate scents of various types of mould in a variety of structures, including attics and crawl spaces. When she locates mould, she alerts Haverkate by sitting, and he rewards her efforts with a treat.

Haverkate's partnership with Quincy began when he reasoned if canines could be trained to sniff out drugs and bombs, they could be trained to detect mould. A quick Internet search confirmed that 35 mould dogs were working the United States, and he contacted the Florida Canine Academy. Haverkate had to undergo 40 hours of training with Quincy before she could come to Canada to work with him.

Before Quincy came along, Toronto area homeowners had only two options to seek out mould: a visual inspection, which can't detect hidden mould problems; or costly air testing, which won't pinpoint which wall the mould is growing in.

Haverkate started offering Quincy's services in September 2003 and it's kept his company very busy. "It's really amazing to see her find mould growth hidden inside wall cavities", says Haverkate. "It really cuts down on the number of walls or floors that need to be opened up to find the source of the problem". Most mould issues

tend to be hidden and don't necessarily show any material signs of an issue. The underlining problems, however, can be immense including the development of allergies and respiratory health problems for the occupants. "Quincy has become the most valuable tool in my arsenal of mould detection artillery", says Haverkate.

The basement is one of the chief sources of mould in the house. Angelo Garaci, owner of Watertite Waterproofers, says his company does about 400 estimates per season and "80 per cent of those have visible mould. Most of it is in localized areas, but we have had a few doozies."

Many of these mouldy basements have had leaks for some time, which has developed into a persistent problem that the home owner is no longer able to remedy himself. Most homes Garaci's company deals with are older homes, though even new homes can have serious mould problems. Water proofing can't completely eliminate dampness, but it can greatly reduce the problem and help control it, when used in conjunction with other methods.

For more information about Quincy or indoor air quality testing, click on www.mouldog.ca.

For information about Watertite and its services, click on www.watertite.ca.

Avoid indoor air quality problems

1. Address all water leaks immediately and properly. Indoor mould growth can occur within 48 to 72 hours of water events such as floods, appliance over flows, roof leaks and basement leaks. Stop the water and stop mould.
2. Manage your relative humidity. Even high relative humidity can cause extensive mould damage and dust mites.
3. Have your ducts cleaned regularly. Dirty ducts add to the overall airborne dust load in the air and can cause severe respiratory issues and allergies.
4. Reduce the dust load in the air. Most buildings require extra filtration such as central or portable HEPA filters to filter out what your furnace filter misses.
5. Don't ignore your vacuum cleaner. Most portable vacuum cleaners are the major pollutants and contributors to dust in the breathable air. A properly vented central vacuum system is the key.
6. Manage the CO2 levels in your home. Many newer homes need extra ventilation systems or HRV systems to bring in fresh air for occupant comfort and relief.
7. Reduce the chemical levels in your home. Choose less toxic cleaning products and less toxic decorating materials.
8. Don't forget about your water. Municipal water supplies that are not filtered can actually affect air quality through impurities being aerosolized through shower heads, dishwasher and other water appliances. It's not just about safe drinking water.
9. Maintain and clean your furnace. Dust scorching in poorly maintained furnace systems can cause a variety of health issues. Poorly functioning heating and cooling systems can cause poor indoor air quality.
10. Have your home tested. Once you know what air quality problems you have, it's easier to fix.

Haverkate & Associates Indoor Environmental Testing www.SafeAir.ca