Introduction to Functional Edge and Mold Detection

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But anyways, just like with a bomb sniffing dog or drugs or weapons, whatever a dog's trained for, mold dogs are trained in the exact same way. And mold is actually a really easy one for them to detect and differentiate.

So they're just smelling, which I tell my clients is the best because the dogs don't know, you know the, dogs aren't taking finances into consideration or anything like that.

They don' care what the bowl looks like. She's just, smelling for it. Welcome to the Functional Edge. I'm Dr. Julia Ward, and this is where science meets real-world strategies for living healthier, sharper and stronger.

From uncovering hidden environmental toxins to unlocking peak performance and mental clarity, we cover it all. Ready to take control of your health and thrive?

Let's dive in. Welcome to the Functional Edge podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Julia Ward, medical director and founder of Balanced Body Function Medicine.

Today, we're excited to welcome Taylor, founder, of Canine Mold Guide to this show. Taylor is a mold detection specialist who works alongside expertly trained dogs to identify hidden mold in homes, often where traditional testing falls short.

Her mission is rooted in helping individuals and families uncover environmental triggers that may be affecting their health, especially in cases of chronic illness, unexplained fatigue, and persistent inflammation.

In this episode, Detailer will be sharing how canine scent detection works, how mold often goes undetected in homes, what steps you can take to create a safer, healthier living space.

Taylor's Mold Illness Journey and Founding Canine Mold Guide

So stay tuned for a fascinating conversation that blends environmental science, functional wellness, and a powerful partnership between humans and highly trained dogs.

So again, thank you for being here. Can you share what led you to start Canine Mold Guide and how your journey into mold detection began? Yeah, absolutely.

I was actually sick from mold myself to begin with and mold illness before we experienced it in our home, I thought was something that people were making up or.

you know, something that was just in their head. And so I got humbled personally, but we had a guy come out that said he was a mold inspector and he ran some air tests and found some kind of inconclusive results.

But then offered us this fog that cost $2,000, but cure our entire house of any mold that there was in it. And so we didn't know anything about mold at the time.

So we just went for that. I came back in the house a few days later and immediately started experiencing symptoms again. Then we knew we had to dig a little farther.

We did some research and we took care of a bathroom first that we new had had a leak. We were living in a very

old home at the time. And then after that, some symptoms went away and then some didn't.

So then we got some testing done on our AC and came back with on one Q-tip swab, over 600 spores of Ketomium, which is one of the black molds. We replaced the AC system.

Then after we were kind of down to the point where we we're like, Just do we keep tearing out walls to see what else there is? And then I heard about the dogs.

I had heard Bill Witzstein on a podcast and there was no dog in Texas at the time. And so I called Bill himself and was like, Hey, we need one of these dogs in.

Will you train one for me? And that's how we ended up with Jessie. That's awesome. So what kind of training and certification do mold detection dogs undergo and how do they compare to traditional mold testing methods?

Yeah, Jesse was with Bill for three months. Um, and then I was. With Bill and Jesse for a week, learning how to train with her. When you leave training, you're not done immediately.

It's basically you go home and continue learning, how you are working with your dog. and how it compares to normal testing.

How Mold Detection Dogs Are Trained

Normal testing is super helpful in finding the kind of species that you're dealing with, but it doesn't help you pinpoint where the mold is located, which is in the end what you need to know because you have to remove it.

from your home or office or whatever the building may be. So the dog specializes in locating where the mold is at. Right, right. The dog's not going to tell you what kind of mold it is, but he's going point to where it Yes.

And another question that I get a lot is, can the dog tell you how much there is? Not exactly, but if the Dog is alerting to, I mean, the handler can read the dogs body language to a pretty great degree until like, is she freaking out or she's just like okay, something's here.

But also if The dog is learning every 18 inches, then we've got a widespread problem on our hands versus like one isolated thing. Okay, yeah, that makes sense.

And how exactly does a dog detect mold and how accurate are they in locating hidden sources of contamination? The dog is using their nose to smell it and they have a really unique system built into their nos.

They're much more sensitive than humans are, although I will say I have been around some really sensitive humans as well. But anyways, just like with a bond sniffing dog or drugs or weapons, whatever a dog is trained for, mold dogs are trained in the exact same way.

And mold is actually a really easy one for them to. detect and differentiate. So they're just smelling, which I tell my clients is the best because the dogs don't know, you know the, dogs aren't taking finances into consideration or anything like that.

They don' care what the wall looks like. She's just smellin' for it. Yeah, yeah. Now are there specific breeds of dogs that are better for this than others?

You need a dog that, it can't be a smush nose dog. So no bulldogs, stuff like that. And they need to be fairly young, obviously just because you don't want to train a that's at the end of its working life anyways.

How Dogs Detect Mold and What They Can Identify

Um, but Bill says that you know, they needed to high energy and they do have to food motivated. But as far as

breeds go. Yeah. No, I mean really any good dog do it.

Sometimes like the problem dogs are the ones that need a job. They make good mold dogs. Okay, yeah, they just have a lot of energy and they need something to do.

Yeah. Are they able to differentiate between mold and mycotoxins or are they alerting to both? To my understanding, the dogs are only alerting to mold spores and that's what makes the most sense to me because in a house where mold is, you know, a big problem, mycotoxin are everywhere.

And so the dog wouldn't be effective in locating the source of the mold unless it was only doing that part. If it was alerting to mycotoxins, I'm pretty sure that the dog would just walk in a house with mold and be like, yep, it's here, which would not make it any more useful than.

Yeah. You need to find the source of where those mycotoxin are coming from. You will see sometimes like a mattress or couch that came out of a really moldy space.

The dog can pinpoint those. And I think that's because there's a collection of spores actually in that furniture, which has happened, or clothing sometimes, a mattress that I had no idea came out of a moldy building.

And then once the owner saw it, they were like, oh, this is the only thing we brought with us from our, you know, molding apartment or whatever. Well, that's so interesting.

Yeah. So mold dogs, do they identify the difference between like active mold that is growing versus residual or kind of dead mold? Nope. They are going to be able to smell either one, which is honestly what makes them such an effective tool because some of the mold was making me sick.

was from previous leaks that had happened. And after we opened up the wall, we could see the previous owner had even patched the plumbing that has leaked, didn't replace any of the insulation or surrounding sheetrock that have gotten wet.

So there was just an old growth, but it still produces mycotoxins and so it's still affects your health. Yeah. What are the most common places in a home where you find mold, especially in humid regions like here in Houston?

Yeah, Houston is honestly, in my experience, not super different than anywhere else. But the HVAC is a huge, huge area that we see issues. Other than that, all things are kind of even across houses.

So under windows, leaking plumbing, so like bathtubs, sinks, dishwashers, that's all the really common stuff, unless they've had a flood.

Common Mold Locations and Limits of Traditional Testing

And I know, you know Houston was, had many floods recently in the last five years. Exactly. Yeah. Lots of common, lots of floods here. How often do you find that traditional air testing or ERMI misses what the dogs are detecting?

Air testing and ERMI I find have had very different responses. So air testing misses a ton and it's a very common story for people to tell me like I've had one, two, or sometimes even three traditional mold inspectors in before me and Jesse come in that aren't finding anything and then Jesse's able to locate what's going on.

The ER MI picks up a lot because it's sampling the dust and people will get dust from all over the place in their house. The only thing that the ERMI is, which it is helpful for like, okay, we do have a problem, but I do tell people don't let the Ermi send you over edge and make you want to burn your house down because especially in Texas, the results look very alarming, But it only takes one source to create that number.

And so just locating the source and getting rid of it is what you have to do. Okay. Yeah. Do you collaborate with

environmental inspectors or remediators once the mold is found?

And what happens after a positive detection? So kind of depending on where it's located and what the client wants to, because obviously it still their house.

If they want to work with a remediatr and the remediaor wants talk to me about where the dog was alerting, then we do that. But yeah, I mean, talk to remediators and other inspectors on the phone, but I've also done work where a remedeator was working and they weren't able to get a clearance test done or the clearance tests was failing.

And so we came in to locate what was left. So yeah. I guess in that way we work with them. Okay. Yeah. So what are some subtle signs that might suggest someone should consider mold inspection with a dog, especially if other tests have come back, like inconclusive?

For a lot of people, it's usually their health symptoms that aren't clearing up. Are you asking about health systems or the house itself? I guess the house itself, but I would guess it would apply to health symptoms as well.

Like if they're still having chronic fatigue or headaches or congestion, you know, that's not clearing up. And maybe they've had a mold inspection that hasn't found anything.

Yeah. I mean, if you're having symptoms, I tell my clients. Trust your body, because if you feel worse in your house than you'd feel everywhere else, then your bodies just giving you a red flag that something's wrong.

And I've had enough people that are trying to convince themselves nothing is wrong, but then they say like, oh, I'm having heart palpitations as soon as I walk in the house.

I mean, some things can be in our head, that's not in you head. Your body's telling you. You know, things have got, something's not right for you in that house.

One thing I do see a lot of is somebody who's been through remediation of some part of the house already.

Working with Remediators and Knowing When to Use a Mold Dog

And they haven't done small particle cleaning afterward. I do think some, a lot of times like the source has been fixed, but the small particle cleaning is getting all of the dust out of house, all traces of that because the mycotoxins are.

moving with the dust. And I think that part of the remediation process is kind of underplayed sometimes and it's super important. Yeah. Is there something that needs to be done as far as like preparing for a dog mold inspection just to ensure that there's accurate results?

Really the only thing I recommend is just to do a cleaning of like the window sills sometimes if the client wants to. The windows are a common area for mold to be, but they're also a comment area where an enormous amount of dust has collected.

And so we don't want to have like a false positive on a huge collection of Other than that, no, I ask my clients to have their dogs or cats out of the house just so Jessie can focus.

And then I asked them as well to just remove any like artificial fragrances, so Glade plugins, that kind of stuff. Not that that really can throw the dog off, but it's not going to throw her off the scent.

But for my health and for her health, Yeah, yeah. Do you think that every home with mold illness should be assessed with a mold dog, even if the tests are negative, like if they've had an inspector come in?

For the most part, yes, because there are, I've just seen so many times now where inspectors cleared the house, but especially a kid. It's usually a child in the House that is having some kind of, you know, pans, pandas symptoms

and they're like, oh, maybe it's at school.

But then Jesse's able to locate, you know, something going on. So, yeah. Isn't that sort of complement to the traditional mold inspectors, especially if you're continuing to have symptoms and you just need to rule out, is this really gone?

Because I mean, ultimately that's the question that we're, am I living in a moldy environment is the million dollar question, right? Yeah. I mean, honestly, if, If I was choosing, I would go with the dog first and then that can kind of help guide the inspector to like where to get samples from.

Um, and I've actually heard back from several inspectors myself saying this was the best way to go. Like recommending you from now on because then they know exactly where it'd go and get Samples from Yeah.

Yeah, absolutely. And I don't know if you're comfortable answering this on the podcast, but just ballpark pricing. Like what, what was somebody looking at if, if they want to hire you to come check out, say like an apartment, you know, room or how do you charge?

Yeah, so roughly by square feet, but then it also depends. So like you're located in Houston. I'm in DFW. so getting to Houston, there'll be a travel fee.

But there are, we travel all over the country and there whenever possible, I will recommend another mold dog that I know is doing great work. If there's already one closer.

Okay. Yeah. That makes sense. What surprised you the most in your work with mold detection dogs? For me personally, I did not expect how much this job was going to be kind of a mix between working with the dog and almost counseling or for my, for clients.

Pricing, Emotional Impact, and Growing Awareness

It's a large emotional piece because I was affected by mold and now recovered from it. And so many of my clients are just on the beginning of really hard journey.

because it's your home and your health. And I mean, a lot of time they're children's health and so I'm often on the phone speaking with somebody who's crying or I am the first person they've talked to that believes them that something is going on in their house.

That honestly took me by surprise. almost from the first appointment I ever had with somebody. And some are really cut and dry, in and out, like there's a leak.

They have plenty of money, they're going to fix it, no big deal. But finances and the health piece are all, can be very complicated. So yes, the emotional piece has really shocked me, I guess.

Yeah. Yeah, what is your hope for how awareness of mold and its impact on health continues to grow? I'm very hopeful. I feel like now that it's starting to become mainstream almost that mold can affect your health and.

I do get concerned that some people really blow it out of the water, but if somebody is having symptoms inside of a house, I don't want anybody minimizing it at all.

How much a very small, you know, every body is different and so a small exposure can affect one person in a way that will have absolutely no effect on another person.

But I'm glad awareness is spreading. There do seem to be more and more dogs being trained because if Jesse and I are any indication, there is so much work to done in helping people.

Locate mold in their homes and I tell all my clients people will ask me all the time But did you leave the house that

you were in or whatever? No, we remediated and my health recovered and we stayed in that house and So I just want people to know like there's hope on the other side of experiencing mold illness.

It's a very hard journey and you definitely need a team of people. Walk you through it sometimes or talk you off the edge at other times, but hope for healing is definitely there.

Yeah. So where can people learn more about your services and do you offer nationwide consultations? My website is k9moldguide.com, the letter K and the number nine.

And I am on Instagram as well, but I'm not super active because Jesse and I have been working constantly. But they can also just give me a call, my number is on the website.

Yes, we do offer nationwide services. I do recommend a local mold dog wherever possible, Jesse and I have flown all over. That's great. Well, thank you very much for all your information.

It's been really informative and i appreciate your time.

Where to Learn More and Closing Remarks

So yes, Thank you. Thank You for joining me on the functional edge. I hope today's episode gave you fresh insights and practical tools to level up your life.

If you've found value in what you heard, don't forget to hit subscribe, share the podcast with someone who needs it and leave a review. It's the best way to support our mission of bringing powerful health solutions to more people.

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