



# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Departments of  
Human Environment and Design  
Agricultural Engineering  
Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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### GUIDE TO CARE FOR CARPETS AND RUGS

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DO NOT REMOVE

Think of the original appearance of a carpet or rug as part of your initial investment. Proper, regular care will prolong the wear life of carpets and rugs and protect your investment.

A rug can hold practically its own weight in dirt and still look clean on the surface. Some colors and types of carpets show soil less than others. All carpets trap unseen, embedded dirt that can cut the yarns and increase wear and tear. Every step made by an adult on a carpet exerts a pressure up to several hundred pounds per square inch on fibers which may be surrounded by sharp dirt particles.

Surface litter and dust will be picked up by an efficient vacuum cleaner or carpet sweeper. Embedded, gritty dirt sinks into the pile out of sight and is ground deeper with each step. The vacuum brush loosens the dirt, and the suction pulls the dust into the bag.

Greasy, atmospheric soil from cooking and heating settles on carpets as on other surfaces, but is less visible. Shampooing and occasionally professional cleaning are necessary to remove this type of soil.

#### Regular Care

Daily cleaning keeps dirt from working down into rugs. Go over your carpets lightly with a carpet sweeper or vacuum cleaner.

Weekly vacuuming gets the deep-down dirt that cuts the carpet yarns. Move the vacuum back and forth seven times for thorough cleaning.

Every year or so, wet-clean your carpet to remove greasy, atmospheric soil which dulls the appearance of the surface. Periodic professional cleaning is recommended every two years to remove soil and detergent build-up which occurs over time from home cleaning methods.

Remove spots and stains as soon as they occur. (See stain removal chart.)

#### DRY METHOD

Use commercially prepared solvent-saturated or detergent-saturated powders between shampooing to clean and brighten the carpet surface. Dry powders remove dull, dingy, oily deposits from carpets which are not heavily soiled. Follow manufacturer's directions and precautions.

#### WET METHOD

Use wet cleaning or shampooing to remove heavy soiling. Use either a special commercial rug shampoo or dry suds from a home formula of 1Tb light-duty detergent whipped with 1/2c warm water. Frequent use of a home detergent solution will

- leave a residue that causes faster resoiling. Never use soap, ammonia, washing soda or strong household cleaning agents on soft floor coverings.
- Test the cleaning solution in an inconspicuous area to be sure the carpet does not fade. If there is a color change, call a professional cleaner.
  - Remove as much furniture from the room as possible. Clean one side of the room first; let carpet dry, then, clean the opposite side.
  - Thoroughly vacuum carpet before shampooing.
  - Follow the directions that come with mechanical applicators.
  - When hand cleaning, apply foam with a soft brush to a small area at a time. Remove soiled suds with a spatula and rinse with a clear, damp cloth. Repeat, using overlapping, circular motion.
  - Use an electric fan or the reverse air blast from the vacuum cleaner to speed drying. When thoroughly dry, vacuum to remove residue and suspended soil.
  - If furniture is put back before carpet completely dries, put small pieces of aluminum foil, cardboard or wax paper under legs to prevent wood or rust stains.
  - Caution: Avoid overwetting. It can cause shrinkage and staining if the backing gets wet enough to "bleed" through to the surface yarns.

#### FOAM METHOD

Commercial foam sprays (relatively new) should also be considered as a temporary surface cleaning between shampoos. Follow label directions carefully.

#### PROFESSIONAL CLEANING

Room-size rugs and some wall-to-wall carpets can be sent to the professional rug cleaning plant to remove embedded dirt and surface soil. Professional cleaners can also handle spot removal, re-dyeing, re-binding and repairs. Always alert the cleaner to the location and cause of spots and stains that require attention.

Professional cleaners also provide on-location cleaning for carpets and rugs, using many different methods, each with its advantages and disadvantages. The main factor to consider is the skill and ability of the operator. Ask reputable carpet dealers whom they recommend. Ask the cleaner to suggest satisfied customers to contact. Rug cleaners of long-standing reputation can usually be relied upon to provide satisfactory service.

#### STAIN REMOVAL HINTS

- Attend to spills and accidents as soon as they occur. Remove excess material. Test stain remover to determine its effect on carpet color. If any change is noticeable call a professional cleaner.
- Use clean, white, absorbant cloths or tissues. Do not overwet or over-rub. Work quickly, in circular motion from outer edges to center of stained area.
- Reapply spot remover until all staining is removed. Rinse area with clear, warm to cool water. Put clean white absorbant cloth or towel over cleaned area and weight with heavy object until dry.

Oily Stains--Apply solution of 1 teaspoon dry detergent, 1 teaspoon white vinegar and 1 quart warm water. Follow with non-flammable dry cleaning solution. Re-apply as necessary.

Non-Oily Stains--Apply detergent-vinegar-water solution.

Unknown Stains--Call professional cleaner for advice. Otherwise, apply a dry-cleaning fluid; follow with a detergent-water solution. Repeat dry cleaning solution if necessary.