HOW TO CARE FOR
CARPETS
AND
RUGS

By
Irene Crouch
Extension Agent, Home Management

NDAC Extension Service, Fargo
NORTH DAKOTA AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE
MAXIMUM LIFE AND BEAUTY for rugs and carpets can be achieved by regular care. Go over the carpet daily with a carpet sweeper or vacuum cleaner for light pickups and for fluffing matted pile.

Vacuum thoroughly once or twice a week, depending on amount of soil tracked in from outside. Give each section of the floor covering seven individual strokes with the vacuum cleaner, forward, back, forward, back, forward, back, forward. The thorough cleaning not only brushes and freshens carpeting, but helps prevent gritty dirt from sifting down between the tufts. If permitted to reach the base of a rug, grit cuts the tufts and backing like a sharp knife.

However conscientious you may be about vacuuming, soiled areas may develop. This soil comes from smudge, greasy film, soot and other surface soil which shows up along traffic areas and in front of davenport chairs. Vacuum cleaners cannot prevent nor remove all of this greasy, sooty soil. If soil has not become too deeply imbedded, such areas can be surface cleaned or brightened with a good rug cleaner. Use a light hand or you may distort the pile, making the areas more noticeable than ever. For such cleaning you can choose a wet foam shampoo, a dry absorbent powdered shampoo or a dry-cleaning solvent. Follow directions carefully for use of any of these cleaners. In using a wet foam shampoo, be careful to wet only the surface, not deep into the backing. If the backing becomes wet you may have trouble with brown spots. This is not rust but color and impurities dissolved from the back of the carpet which rise up through the tufts and remain on the ends of tufts as the carpet dries.

If you use a dry-cleaning solvent be sure to avoid inhaling fumes, which are toxic. Have windows open so liquid evaporates quickly and lessens chance of inhaling fumes.

A good vacuum cleaner is a necessary piece of equipment when powder cleaners are used. Fine powder is more difficult to remove from the carpet than the coarser type of compound.
Never use soaps for surface cleaning rugs or carpet, or for spot removal. Avoid ammonia solution, washing soda or any of the common household cleaning agents normally used for cleaning walls and smooth surface floors. Without thorough rinsing, which isn't possible in home rug cleaning, a residue may be left that attracts soil, affects color, or has other damaging effects. Only a non-alkaline synthetic detergent should be used. The better known wet foam shampoos on the market can be so classified.

Whatever method of surface cleaning you use, it is not a substitute for professional cleaning. How often professional cleaning is necessary is determined by the amount of traffic and thoroughness of home cleaning.

CARPETS "CERTIFIED CLEANABLE"

Since carpets must be cleaned sooner or later it is important that you know how well your carpet will clean. The National Institute of Rug Cleaners has issued a "Seal of Cleanability" for specific carpets on basis of performance. It does not include any assessment of how well a rug or carpet can be cleaned, but does determine whether or not it will be damaged by methods likely to be used by good commercial cleaners. When buying watch for "Seal of Cleanability" labels.

PROFESSIONAL CLEANING

Room size rugs may be sent to the cleaning plant, where they can be cleaned most thoroughly and most efficiently. If you have wall-to-wall carpeting, "on-location" cleaning is required. When it is necessary to have your carpet cleaned on the floor, choose a reliable company for this work. You can be more certain of good results.
FIRST AID FOR SPOTS AND STAINS

Treat stains promptly. Be prepared by having on hand absorbent paper or cloth, a cellulose sponge, a non-alkaline synthetic detergent, white vinegar and a dry-cleaning fluid.

The National Institute of Rug Cleaning suggests the following formulas. Such simple treatments may not always remove the stain, but neither will they set stains if used according to directions:

**Formula 1** — Mix thoroughly one teaspoonful of detergent with one cup lukewarm water. Absorb the liquid into a sponge or unstarched white cloth and squeeze gently on the spot. Blot up moisture with damp cloth or cellulose sponge. Finally, dampen cloth or sponge in clean, lukewarm water, squeeze on area and absorb. Repeat several times. Finish by blotting up remaining moisture with a pad of dry cloth or paper towels applied to the spot and weighted in place.

**Formula 2** — One-half cup of white vinegar mixed with one and one-half cups of lukewarm water. Saturate a sponge or cloth with this solution and squeeze gently on the spot. Allow it to remain on the stain for 2 or 3 minutes and then blot with a damp cloth. Squeeze lukewarm water on the area and blot again several times. Finish by blotting up remaining moisture with a pad of dry cloth or paper towels weighted in place.

Dry-cleaning fluid — Use this, undiluted, according to directions on the container. Use sparingly to avoid damage to latex backing.
GENERAL RULES FOR SPOTTING

1. Blot up spills as soon as possible, using clean white un-starched cloths or paper towels. The longer the spill remains the harder it is to remove.

2. Don’t brush or rub the spot any more than can be helped. Excessive action may result in a distortion worse than the spot. Begin at outer edge and work toward center of the stained area.

3. Before using a formula, test it on the carpet and note its effect on the dyes. If the color comes away, better call a professional.

4. Have patience. Some spots require much time and some may never yield.

5. Never permit a wetted area to dry slowly in air. Blot as much as possible and then leave a pad of weighted cloth or paper towels on it to absorb the remaining moisture.

TREATMENT FOR SPECIFIC STAINS

- Fruits, Fruit Juices, Alcohol, Coffee, Tea, Soft Drinks

  Blot up the spill. With a sponge squeeze Formula 1 on the spot. Blot. Follow with plain lukewarm water. Blot. Repeat several times, then apply Formula 2 and blot up the excess. Dry thoroughly as directed.

  Most beverages contain sugar, which is colorless when first deposited on a fabric. After being exposed to the air for some time caramelization occurs and sets permanently. Later, when exposed to direct sunlight or heat used for rug drying, it may appear as a tan or brown discoloration.

- Ice Cream and Milk Desserts, Mustard

  Sponge with lukewarm water. Follow with Formula 1 as directed.
Egg, Gelatin, Blood

If dry, call a professional rug cleaner. If still wet, scrape up all possible and apply Formula 1 as directed. Follow with Formula 2.

Butter and Other Fats

Saturate a sponge or cloth with a dry cleaning solvent and sponge the spot, working from the outside toward the center.

Pet Stains

This is among the most serious of household stains. Color changes can be held to a minimum if the stain is treated at once. Treat with lukewarm water. Blot. Several applications may be necessary. Follow with Formula 2 as directed. This is effective in many cases but where color change occurs, no treatment can restore the color. A professional cleaner can improve the appearance by spot dyeing the affected area.

Medicines, Mercurochrome, Hardened Point, Rust, Nail Polish

Call a professional rug cleaner for advice.

INSECT CONTROL

Good housekeeping is one of the best defenses against moth damage. Regular vacuuming will discourage moth larvae and carpet beetles. Wool rugs may be treated for moth resistance at the factory. Commercial carpet cleaners are usually equipped to give a rug an insect repelling treatment.

To control the carpet beetle larvae use a household dust containing 50 per cent methoxychlor. Apply the dust to surfaces where the insects are likely to crawl, such as the edges of wall-to-wall carpets, in wall and floor cracks, along baseboards and other hard to clean places. If you prefer a spray, apply 5 per cent methoxychlor.

If moths are your problem, use a 10 per cent DDT dust or a 5 per cent DDT spray. While DDT is effective for moths it will not eliminate carpet beetles.