

Spring clean your carpets

Thoughts of spring should also bring thoughts of carpet cleaning. No matter how often you vacuumed it over the winter, your carpet will probably need a thorough cleaning to get rid of the effects of snow, ice and salt, says Greta C. Vairo, Delaware County Extension home economist with the Penn State Extension Service.

If you decide to clean your carpets yourself, several methods, including aerosol spray foam, shampoo, hot water extraction and dry powder, are available. Aerosol spray foam is convenient, dries quickly and is suitable for spot cleaning. But it is also more expensive than liquid shampoo and may leave a residue.

If you choose this method, spray a thin layer of foam on the rug,

then work it in with a wet sponge mop. After it dries completely, vacuum to remove loosened dirt.

Shampooing is a little more involved and cannot be used on shag rugs because the pile can become entangled in the brushes of the electric shampooer. In this method, a water and detergent solution is applied to a freshly vacuumed rug with the sham-

poor, manual applicator, sponge mop or hand brush.

An electric shampooer works best because it agitates the carpet fibers and works the shampoo into the pile. For even cleaning, overlap the strokes, but do not go over one area too many times. The carpet will become damaged from too much agitation and may also become too wet. After cleaning each section, brush the wet pile in one direction with the applicator, but be careful not to soak the carpet since the backing may become wet and cause brown stains. When the foam has dried thoroughly, vacuum the rug.

The newest carpet cleaning method is hot water extraction, or steam cleaning. Originally, the equipment was available only professionally, but now you can rent equipment to clean your carpets yourself.

With this method, a mixture of hot tap water and special non-foaming detergent is forced into the carpet pile under pressure. The dirt is loosened or dissolved by the detergent and most of the solution

is immediately extracted by a powerful vacuum.

Because most of the soil and solution is removed, less residue remains in the carpet. This method can also remove residue from other cleaning methods. The dry powder method is safe for non-colorfast carpeting, but is less effective on stains that are not greasy. In this method, absorbent granules containing dry cleaning fluid are sprinkled over the carpet surface and worked into the pile with a brush. The powder absorbs oils and some dirt.

Dry powder causes no problems with distortion of the pile, but it may be difficult to completely vacuum all the powder. This will be especially evident on dark colors.

Since not all cleaning agents can be used safely on all fibers and dyes, be sure to mix the product according to directions and test it on an inconspicuous area like a corner, or behind a piece of furniture. Penn State is an affirmative action, equal opportunity university.

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