homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Monday Jan. 26, 1942

SUBJECT: "CARE OF RUGS AND CARPETS." Information from household equipment and textile experts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Rugs and carpets have taken on added value recently since the Government's conservation program has put restrictions on the sale of carpet wool and new wool. Rugs and carpets may not be so easy to buy from now on. So save those you have by the very best care.

Up until the beginning of the war in Eurppe most of our carpet wool came from China, India or other countries in Asia. And much of this Asiatic wool came to us by way of England. When England entered the war, shipping space became too scarce to carry carpet wool three-quarters of the way around the globe. So the United States began buying more carpet wool from South America. But South American wools are much softer than Asiatic carpet wool and carpet-makers don't find them so durable. So the Government is now restricting carpet wool.

Wool is not the only material important in carpet-making that is now becoming scarce. Jute is also scarce. No jute grows in this country; all of our supply has come from India. In time carpet-makers may be able to substitute caroa fiber from Brazil. But Brazil won't be able to ship enough of this fiber to meet our needs for some time.

This gives you an idea why the rugs and carpets you own are valuable enough to deserve the care that will make them last.

Enough cleaning and the right kind of cleaning are very important in making rugs last. Dirt down in a rug--not the dirt on top that you can see, but the gritty dirt that has worked down into the fibers causes more wear and damage to your rug

than walking on it. The particles of grit embedded at the base of the pile cut and grind the fibers until eventually whole tufts become loose and work out leaving bare spots on the rug.

Of all the ways of removing dirt from a rug, vacuum cleaning is probably easiest on the rug. Here are a few points about cleaning by vacuum. Before you use the cleaner, pick up any metal objects on the rug like pins or tacks, Also pick up thread, string, bits of paper and cloth. Then notice whether the nozzle of the cleaner is the proper height above the rug. Some cleaners have nozzles that adjust automatically; others you have to adjust. You can tell whether the nozzle is near enough the rug by placing a dime on the rug and starting the cleaner near it. Keep adjusting the nozzle up and down until the dime begins to dance on the rug and move toward the cleaner. That means the nozzle is set low enough for proper cleaning. If your cleaner has a motor-driven brush, be sure the tips of the bristles extend slightly below the sides of the opening in the botton. Bristles wear down with use, and the brush then needs to be set lower.

Still another point about efficient vacuum cleaning is to keep the bag clean. A clean bag allows for much more pull. If the pores of the bag are clogged with dirt, that cuts down the flow of air. So empty the bag often and every few weeks brush the dirt from the fabric of the bag. Never wash the bag because the fabric in some bags has a special finish that may wash out. Clean the rug by pushing the cleaner at a comfortable speed with overlapping strokes. Clean a loose rug on both sides. A short cleaning several times a week is more effective than a long cleaning once a week,

Many women like to use a carpet sweeper to pick up such litter as crumbs from a rug. And many women still use brooms for cleaning rugs. If you use a broom on your rug, be sure the straws are soft and pliable, A stiff stubby broom is hard on a rug, especially a rug with a deep velvety pile. In using either a carpet

sweeper or broom, remember to move across the rug crosswise, not lengthwise, to save strain on the warp threads of the rug that are most important in holding the rug together.

Beating and shaking are rougher methods of removing dirt and naturally cause more wear on the rug. Beating loosens the tufts of the pile and may injure the backing of the rug. But if you must beat, use a rattan beater instead of a wire beater. And if you must shake, shake only small rugs and hold the rug by the side, not the end, so the crosswise threads won't pull apart.

Once a year most rugs need either dry cleaning or a soap-and-water laundering. Genuine Oriental rugs and other soft rugs that contain no stiffening on the back often wash successfully. Dry cleaning is safer for other rugs.

But proper cleaning is not the only way to save a rug. A full-size pad underneath adds years of wear to the rug beside making it feel soft and luxurious, and making the room quieter and warmer. Rough or uneven floors are especially hard on rugs. On such floors pads are a necessity.

Turning a rug around helps, too, because it allows all parts to get equal wear.

Sharp, heavy or rough legs of furniture can make permanent marks and eventually holes in a rug. Turn your furniture up and feel its feet. Use sand-paper on rough feet, or use glass rests under heavy furniture.

Watch out for doors that don't clear rugs. A door that catches on the rug is not only a nuisance but will soon wear down the rug. Get your husband to use a plane on the botton of the door.

You can save rugs, too, by watching for spots and removing them immediately before they become set. In the dining room brush up after each meal before greasy or sticky crumbs can work down into the rug and leave spots. And take up spilled food immediately vith a damp cloth or a cloth moistened in a grease solvent. Under the baby's chair have a piece of oilcloth or linoleum to protect the rug. As for burns, tears or snags in a rug, you'll be wise to have the mended at once before the edges fray and the threads pull apart. Small places you may be able to mend at home. Almost every city nowadays has an expert rug-mending company.

That's all today about conserving rugs and carpets.

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