

21st Century “Fine Fabric Care” Procedures

by Jim Pemberton

Cleaning Today’s Challenging Fabrics

I’ve spent nearly three quarters of my lifetime working with upholstery cleaning products, tools, and procedures. Over that period of time, the largest single obstacle to a cleaner’s confidence in becoming a fine fabric specialist was the fear caused by the perceived complexities of fabrics, testing, as well as the cleaning chemistry and procedures.

The following procedures and products are the simplest, the safest, and the most effective means of cleaning and restoring everything from the most durable synthetic fiber fabrics to the trickiest, hypersensitive natural fiber fabrics available to anyone today!.

Why the SIMPLEST?

Because most of the cleaning is done by one of two preconditioners: “**Upholstery Pre-spray**” for synthetic fiber fabrics, or “**Natural Fiber Cleaner**” for natural fiber fabrics and blends. Other than the occasional need of an additive or a specialty spot and stain remover, these two products really “do it all”.

Why the SAFEST?

“**Upholstery Pre-spray**”, while designed primarily for colorfast synthetic fibers, self neutralizes rapidly and easily rinses away. This prespray has the power needed to break down oils, fats, and grease that has bonded to oil loving synthetic fibers, but few of the risks associated with other alkaline prespray products.

“**Natural Fiber Cleaner**” starts with an acidic pH, which makes it ideal for all natural fibers and blends, and especially safe to use on white and potentially non colorfast fabrics. The acidic pH of this product means that no additional acidic rinsing agents are needed, unless severe color bleeding sensitivity exists.

Why the most EFFECTIVE?

Using this unique system; you have a self neutralizing alkaline cleaner, Upholstery Pre-spray, for synthetics, with which you can attack the most troublesome oily soils that otherwise make the cleaning of such abused upholstery fabrics a time consuming and fatiguing task. Plus, in addition you have the unique Natural Fiber Cleaner, an acidic cleaner for natural fibers which is absolutely the best acid based cleaner I have ever used! It has a surfactant system specifically designed to attack oily soils, as well as built in solvent boosters to assist the surfactants so that fabrics that might be otherwise seen as beyond cleaning, can often be restored to a nearly new condition.

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SYNTHETIC FIBER FABRICS

1. Dry Soil Removal:

- a. Vacuum entire article of furniture. Pay special attention to cushions, top arm, top back, and platform.
- b. Use a soft brush to brush and align fibers, especially pile weaves, prior to vacuuming.

2. Precondition:

- a. Apply Sapphire Scientific "**Upholstery Pre-spray**", diluted 4:1 for most soil levels, but can be safely used up to full strength for heavily soiled, abused upholstery.
- b. Use a horsehair brush to agitate the "***Upholstery Pre-spray***" ***preconditioning solution*** into heavily soiled areas such as arms and cushions.
- c. Allow 10-15 minutes of dwell time while you are cleaning lightly soiled outside arms, back, inside back, etc.

3. Extract:

- a. Using a "dry tool", such as the **Upholstery Pro**, extract using Sapphire Scientific "**Upholstery Rinse**".
- b. Use clean white towels to absorb any remaining soil and moisture.
- c. Treat remaining spots, if any, and extract again.

4. **Dry:** Use fans to speed dry fabric for customer convenience and to prevent post cleaning odors.

NATURAL FIBER FABRICS AND BLENDS

1. Dry Soil Removal:

- a. Vacuum entire article of furniture. Pay special attention to cushions, top arm, top back, and platform.
- b. Use a soft brush to brush and align fibers, especially pile weaves, prior to vacuuming.

2. Precondition:

- a. Apply Sapphire Scientific "**Natural Fiber Cleaner**", diluted from 6-12 ounces per gallon, depending on soil level.
- b. Use a soft bristle brush to agitate the "***Natural Fiber Cleaner***" ***preconditioning solution*** into heavily soiled areas such as arms and cushions.
- c. NOTE: Apply product in a light mist or foam. With non colorfast fabrics or those that might experience cellulose browning, limit dwell time

3. **Extract:**

- a. Use a “dry tool” such as the “**Upholstery Pro**”, and extract with clear water. The acidic nature of ‘**Natural Textile Cleaner**’ is such that no additional acid rinsing agents are required.
- b. Use clean white towels to absorb excess soil and moisture. Because of the absorbent nature of natural fibers, it is better to precondition, extract, and dry then repeat the process than to overwet the fabric by trying to remove all the soil at once.
- c. Treat remaining spots, if any, and extract again.
NOTE: Many spotting agents, especially alkaline protein spotters and rust removers, can cause color damage. Test these products carefully before use.

4. **Dry:**

- a. Rapid drying is critical with natural fibers. Use fans to dry fabric as quickly as possible to prevent bleeding, browning, post cleaning odors, as well as for customer convenience.

HYPERSENSITIVE TEXTILE PROCEDURES

WHITE NATURAL FIBERS:

- Clean using the “*Natural Fiber Fabrics and Blends*” *procedure*, but with the added step of applying “**Dye Stabilizer and Rinse**” (diluted 4:1 with water) in a mist and wiping the fabric with a clean white towel before drying. When correcting browning, “Dye Stabilizer and Rinse” may be used in stronger concentrations.

NON COLORAST FABRICS:

- Clean with the “*Natural Fiber Fabrics and Blends*” *procedure*, but with the added steps of applying “**Dye Stabilizer and Rinse**” (diluted 4:1 with water) lightly before and after cleaning. To prevent bleeding, “**Dye Stabilizer and Rinse**” may be used in stronger concentrations if necessary. NOTE: Some fabrics bleed regardless of the pH of the treatment or cleaner. Even dry cleaning solvents should be tested before use.

NON DURABLE TEXTURES (rayon velvet, chenille, boucle, crewel, etc)

- Clean with “*Natural Fiber Fabrics and Blends*” *procedure*. All brush agitation should be in one direction, with the nap lay when possible. Clean in one direction only, and use tools that minimize texture distortion, such as the “**Upholstery Pro**”, when possible. Areas that are not heavily soiled, such as outside arms and backs, should be lightly misted with “**Natural Textile Cleaner**” at a very low dilution rate (4 ounces per gallon or less), and wiped in one direction with a clean, white towel.
- Grooming should be done immediately after cleaning, then again during the drying processes, to restore nap to original texture. The use of steam in plant is often the best way to restore the original texture of such items.

Pembertons

5825 Smithfield St · Mckeesport, PA 15135

Phone: 1-800-342-2297 · **Fax:** 412-751-2278

Email: jimpem2@comcast.net · **URL:** www.Pembertons.com