Summer Nice Smells, Summer Not

By LOUISA JACCAR Special to The Washington Post

he fragrant scents of suntan oil, lemonade, grilled hamburgers and honeysuckle fill the summer air. But in the wake of heavy rains and scorching temperatures, so do the smells of mold, mildew, pets and what can only be called summer funk. Masking all that with air fresheners only layers smell on top of smell. The real goal is to remove the source of the unpleasant odor without damaging possessions or property. And I have found a product that is remarkably effective in eliminating that mildewy, wet-basement summertime stench.

Can You Smell That Smell?

In New Orleans recently, helping to gut a Katrina-flooded house, I was introduced to a nontoxic product that appears to work wonders on mold and mildew. It is called Super Activated Efficient Microbes (SAEM) - a terrible product name, I know, but an effective cleaning and deodorizing agent.

It is far safer than bleach for dealing with mold and mildew," says Katherine Crumpacker, project coordinator for efficient microbes (EM) at Common Ground, a grass-roots organization working to restore houses in the poorest areas of New Orleans. Unlike toxic chemicals that target mold and mildew and degrade the environment, SAEM is a probiotic: It puts good bacteria, with a negative effect on mold and mildew, into the environment.

SAEM contains active, alive microbes that take over the food source the mold eats, and the mold

dies because it has no food," Crumpacker says.

Although SAEM is not being marketed to the public for treating mold and mildew, it is the product of choice for some relief workers in tsunamiravaged areas of South Asia as well as in New Or-

"EM is as effective as the chemicals Conquer and

Microban in treating mold when applied with the protocol used by Common Ground," says Steve Kemp, a Louisiana-certified mold inspector since 2002. "In the houses I inspected, the results have been so incredible - in the best sense of the word - nothing short of miraculous. And all without using dangerous chemicals. Some mold is always present in the humid climate of New Orleans, but this really works.

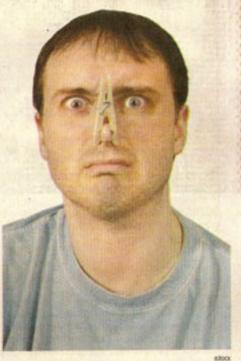
If a mold problem is major, consult a professional. If only a small area is affected and odor is a persistent problem, try SAEM (available at www.

scdworld.com).

The first step is to clean mold and mildew off all surfaces. The liquid SAEM can be diluted with water at one teaspoon of SAEM per cup of filtered or de-chlorinated water. Depending on the severity of the problem, you can increase the amount of SAEM up to one teaspoon per half-cup of water. The surrounding area then should be misted with the solution and allowed to dry. Make sure there is good air circulation during application and that the area dries completely between applications. Fans or dehumidifiers can help.

If the problem is severe, the product should be reapplied every two weeks, then every one to two months until the mold and mildew is gone. Check once a month to make sure these culprits have not reappeared. Remember, the combination of moisture and heat can mean the return of mold and mildew.

Pet Detective



ture's Miracle). Petastic contains enzymes that digest the urine. Follow the directions on the label, allowing the solution to soak into the spot so the enzymes have time to do their job. Both the UV flashlight and Petastic are available at most pet stores.

Removing pet urine from your rug is easiest when the urine is fresh. If the rug is water-safe, then

the best action is to place a bath mat under the spot on the rug and flood the spot with water. The water dilutes the urine and lifts it out of the rug. This method does the least amount of damage to the rugs, especially old or valuable ones. Blot up the excess water and re-flood the area. Continue blotting and flooding until the water is clear of urine. Finally, place a fan so it blows air directly onto the wet

area, and leave it there until the rug is completely

dry.

Mold, mildew, pets and

active kids are primary

sources of summertime

odors. Now there are

nontoxic ways to stem the

stench.

Airing Your Dirty Linen

If you pull a garment or other textile out of storage and it has a musty odor, simple sunshine works wonders. Sunshine is the enemy of mold and mildew. Place the item outside for a few hours on a bright sunny day.

If your article is old and fragile, Newbold Richardson, a conservator from Alexandria, recommends putting it inside the dryer on air-fluff with a dryer sheet for 20 minutes. This is often enough to solve the problem.

Camp Odoriferous

As any parent knows, the stink of sleeping bags and towels just back from camp is awe-inspiring. A cup of white vinegar added to the wash will sweeten, sanitize, deodorize, and loosen hidden dirt. If it is a sleeping bag filled with down, place it in the dryer with an old sneaker. The sneaker "beats" the feathers in the sleeping bag and keeps them from clumping.