Care and Cleaning of Hand-Hooked Rugs

A well-made hand-hooked rug can last many generations. To keep your hooked rugs healthy and strong and looking their best, here are some tips to keep in mind.



Vacuuming: Vacuuming is good for hooked rugs, but you want to make sure the loops are in good shape before you start. First, take a good look at the rug, both from the back and the front. If you notice any strands that have pulled loose, rehook them before vacuuming. If you find the rug is unraveling on the edge, that will need to be patched and rehooked (see Basic Rug Repair). Any unraveling on the edge should be fixed as soon as possible.



Wool moths: If you notice small spots of what looks like concentrated spider web, that's a wool moth cocoon. Pinch off the cocoon, and if possible, roll up the rug, put it in a plastic bag and put it in the freezer overnight (or outdoors in the winter if it's too big to go in your freezer). This should kill any eggs that you can't see.

Wool moths have good sense when laying their eggs. They're looking for dusty, undisturbed wool (you don't see wool moths on the backs of sheep!), which is why they favor wool suits and sweaters in the back of your closet. Vacuuming is great for discouraging the moths from going after your rugs as long as you have taken care of any loose loops first.





(Left, before cleaning. Right, after cleaning.)

Washing your rug: Don't put a wool rug in the washing machine. Rugs hooked with T-shirt strips can be washed in the washing machine, but not rugs hooked with yarn or wool fabric strips. For wool rugs, hand cleaning is best.



Begin with two pans with around two cups of cold water in each. In one, add a tablespoon of laundry detergent (if you're using powdered detergent, make sure the flakes have fully dissolved). In the other pan, add a dash of white vinegar. Put one clean rag in each pot. Squeeze almost all the water out of the soapy rag (you don't want to get the rug soaking wet, just enough moisture to get the grit and hair off the surface of the rug) and in a circular motion, scrub a small section. Then go over that section with the vinegar rinse, again, squeezing most of the water out of the rag. Repeat this process on the top and bottom of the rug, then lay it out on a towel to dry. Outdoors, on a sunny day, a rug should dry in a couple of hours. Inside, it might take as much as a day to dry. Turn the rug over a couple of times while it's drying.

If you need to store a hooked rug for extended periods of time, it's best to avoid folding the rug. Roll it up, (top side on the outside) and wrap it in a sheet.



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