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CC15 Emergency Flood Information...First Aid for Bedding and Household Linens

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Mattresses

Mattresses soaked with flood water should be discarded; reconditioning is too difficult to be done at home. If necessary to use mattresses temporarily, however, scrape off surface dirt and expose them to sunlight to dry as much as possible. Cover with rubber sheeting before using. A good innerspring mattress may be sent to a commercial renovating company.

If you do keep mattresses that have been soaked with flood water, they should be sterilized. This can be done only at a plant which has sterilizing equipment, such as that of a mattress company.

If you do not know where there is a sterilizing plant in operation in your area, ask your local or State Health Department.

To speed up the process, have the mattresses as dry as possible before taking it to the sterilizing plant. Crop drying fans may be used for drying mattresses, pillows and upholstered furniture.

Pillows

If ticking is in good condition, feathers and ticking may be washed together. Open a few inches of the seam in opposite corners of the pillow. Sew loosely by hand, or fasten with strong safety pins.

Another method is to transfer the feathers from the pillow to a muslin bag which is larger than the ticking. Sew the edges of the openings of the ticking and bag together, then shake the feathers from one into the other. Close the seam of the muslin bag which holds the feathers. Wash bag of feathers in lukewarm, sudsy water about 4 to 6 minutes; repeat if necessary and rinse in lukewarm water, changing water several times. If using a nonautomatic washer, squeeze out all the water possible—do not use the wringer. Wash foam rubber cushions with the covers on.

To air dry, hang on a line by two corners. Change position and shake up feathers occasionally to hasten drying. Finish drying pillows by laying them on a flat surface in a dry, airy place. Transfer clean feathers to the clean, starched ticking and close, using same method as for emptying. It may not be possible to remove all objectionable odors.

Blankets

Remove surface dirt by shaking and brushing. Rinse in cool water to remove soil lodged in fiber. Prepare lukewarm suds using a mild or all-purpose detergent. Immerse the blanket and work gently in the suds with as little agitation as possible. If necessary, wash in a second suds. Rinse in several changes of lukewarm water. Hang blankets over two lines or dry them in an automatic dryer with several clean bath towels which are dry and have been preheated. While still damp, brush blankets on both sides to lift the nap. Electric blankets should always be lined dried and gently stretched into their original size and shape.

Sheets, Towels, and Table Linens

First, brush off all loose dirt possible. Then rinse mud-stained fabrics in cold water to take out particles of soil lodged in yarns. Wash articles in warm sudsy water—several times if necessary. Hot suds will set stains caused by red and yellow clay. In extreme cases, try bleaching white cottons and linens using a chlorine or perborate-type bleach in further washings. Do not overbleach flood-stained fabrics. Sun drying may aid in bleaching. Avoid using chemical bleaches on colored fabrics.
Quilts and Comforters

Wash lightweight quilts as you would wool blankets. Dry outdoors in the sun, if possible, to remove any unpleasant odor. Thick comforters may need to be taken apart, and the cover and filling each washed separately.

For more information, contact your county extension agent.