

Like carpet, upholstery can't be vacuumed too much

Fabrics often have a cleaning code that indicates best process

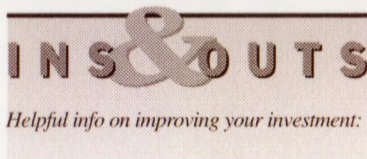
By **VICKI STOUT**
For Williamson A.M.

Upholstery cleaning is quite complicated and should be approached scientifically, according to John Browning of Pro-Care, a company which was founded in Brentwood.

"The first thing to do is look under your cushions or on the base of the piece of upholstery and see if you can find a cleaning code. If so, and it's a 'W,' that means you can use a water-based product; if it is 'S,' you're going to need to use a solvent-based product," he said.

If there's no code, care must be taken to test the fabric before cleaning it.

"Believe it or not, we burn-test it. We take a bit of extra fabric, which



should be part of the upholstery, and burn it to determine what type of fabric it is. There are so many fabrics and blends," Browning says.

He also suggests using a spot cleaner that is neutral; i.e., one with a pH rating of seven or less.

"The ironic thing with upholstery is that the more expensive the fabric, the less likely it is that it can be easily cleaned. Those rich fabrics are most often not resilient enough to be cleaned with a water-based product, unfortunately," he said.

As preventive maintenance, Browning advises regular and frequent vacuuming.

"You cannot vacuum upholstery too often, just like you can't vacuum carpet too often," he said.

For pet owners, he says frequent vacuuming is even more important

and that it should be prefaced with a brushing or the use of a lint roller to remove cat and dog hairs before vacuuming for a more thorough cleaning.

"If you choose to call in a professional, always, always, always find a certified cleaning company. You can do that by visiting the Web site www.IICRC.org. A certified cleaning company's technicians are educated, experienced and will do a better job. Non-certified folks may do more harm than good," he said.

He says the frequency of need for cleaning upholstery depends upon its use.

"If you have three kids and a dog and they're on that den sofa all the time, you should think about cleaning it once every 12 to 18 months or at least having a professional come look to see if it needs cleaning," he advised.

Pro-Care offices are on Trousdale Lane; the phone number is 221-4100 and the Web site is www.procare.net. ■