

# Got pets? You need these cleaning tips

"Is that what I think it is?" I ask my husband while zeroing in on a yellow, rainbow-shaped stain on the side of the white armchair.

"Luke!" We holler in unison at our 60-pound rescue mutt, who promptly flattens his ears and tail, avoids eye contact, and slinks out of the room.

"Are you testing our commitment?" I call after him. He's certainly testing my patience. We know he, and not our smaller dog, did it by the high waterline. Also, Luke's passive aggressive that way. I had been away on a business trip, and this was his way of letting let me know how he felt about that.

"Did he have to target the chair?" I cry. "Why not the wood floor or the wall? Argh!"

"Time to call John?" My husband asks.

"Time to call John," I say.

John Gartner is a professional upholstery cleaner, and owner of Major Floor Care, a cleaning company based in Altamonte Springs, Florida.

Unfortunately, he's also a regular around here. His records show he's been to my home five times in as many years. "That's pretty typical of houses with kids or pets," he says, which makes me feel only slightly better.

I call him when the surface soil around the house hits my tipping point, or when we have a pet emergency. Today, it's both.

Before Luke (aka Marmaluke, Luclear War, Luk-o-motion) expressed himself on the chair, our house had already, once again, gone to the dogs. Pippin, our miniature Labradoodle, has a habit of wiping his muzzle, followed by



AT HOME WITH  
Marni Jameson

his entire body, along the length of the white sectional, which ultimately gives it a sort of bathtub ring effect.

Luclear War generally behaves when we're home, but the minute we leave, he hops on the furniture. The crushed sofa backs, grimy chair arms (where he rests his grubby chin), and rearranged throw pillows give him away.

And this is why I know my upholstery cleaner's phone number by heart.

"Typically, homes get dirty gradually, so owners don't notice," said Gartner, who has been cleaning furniture and carpet for 26 years. "They call when they hit a pain point, like they have company coming."

"I hit a pain point all right," I said.

While the golden arch on the white chair horrified me, Gartner wasn't fazed. He's seen and cleaned worse stains from every substance you can imagine and some you can't: chocolate, coffee, grease, ink, lipstick, blood, barf, red wine, nail polish, urine, diaper failures, and all-around surface soil.

But pets and kids keep upholstery and carpet cleaners in business, he said. "The biggest weeks

for me are the ones after Christmas and Easter," he said. "That's when pets get into the candy and get sick." Lovely.

He then commended me for calling him while the stain was still fresh, as if living with a urine-stained chair in the family room was an option.

Over FaceTime, I showed him the sofas, chairs, and area rugs I needed cleaned. He sent an estimate. (Chairs run \$60 to \$80.) Two days later, he and his partner set to work vacuuming the furniture and rugs and pre-treating stains.

Then they ran over the furniture with a DriMaster tool, which looks like a squeegee attached to a hose. The business end pressure injects water and cleaning solution into the fabric through one channel and simultaneously vacuum-sucks the moisture back out through another, so furniture gets cleaned and not soaked.

"You want to avoid oversaturating upholstery, so you don't leave watermarks," he said. When a spill or pet accident seeps through the surface fabric and saturates a sofa or chair cushion, Gartner takes it to his shop to deep clean and deodorize.

"I bring at least 12 stain-removing chemicals on the truck," he said, "so I'm ready to treat whatever we find."

"I need them all," I said.

While regular furniture cleaning is part of living with dogs and kids, here are some tips for treating soiled furniture yourself, and when to call a pro.

- Act fast. Don't let stains sit.

The quicker a stain gets treated, the greater the chances it will come out. After 30 days, it may be

too late, Gartner said.

- Don't rub it in. Always blot, never rub. Whether on upholstery, rugs, or carpet, rubbing will grind the substance in and wear down the fibers, possibly making the stain permanent.

- Keep cool. Always use cold water. Hot water sets stains fast. Club soda is often a good start.

- Create a solution. You can treat many pet stains with a mild

solution of half white vinegar, half water, and a few drops of dish-washing soap. (Vinegar loosens urine from fibers, Gartner said.) Pour a small amount of solution on the stain. Let it sit for several minutes, then blot it with a white towel. Use a fan to dry. Depending on the fabric (test on a hidden area first), a small amount of

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