

# Wool rugs

**Wool is Keratin, a protein fiber. Pet Stain removers often contain enzymes that dissolve protein.**  
When you use them on wool, you are essentially breaking down your rug.

NATURAL PROTEIN FIBER (KERATIN) ·

MANUFACTURER-COMPLIANT (STARK/WOOLSAFE) · 4 MIN READ

# How to Clean Wool Rugs: Science-Backed Protocol

Wool is self-cleaning if you preserve its natural lanolin. It is destroyed by enzymes and rotating brushes. This applies to wool rugs like Beni Ourain and Persian rugs.

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## Wool Rugs

PILE PROTECTION AND ENZYME SAFETY

Wool rugs, including Beni Ourain and Persian rugs, are hair fibers similar to human hair. They have microscopic scales that lock dirt out but open up when exposed to high pH.

Prohibited methods include enzyme cleaners, hydrogen peroxide, and vacuums with spinning brush rolls. This protocol focuses on suction-only vacuuming and WoolSafe approved surfactants.

## **The science: why wool is different**

### **The Enzyme Threat**

Wool consists of keratin protein. Most "pet stain removers" use protease enzymes to eat organic stains. These enzymes cannot distinguish between the urine stain and the wool fiber. They digest both.

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### **The pH Scale and Felting**

Wool is naturally acidic (pH 4.5-5.5). High alkaline cleaners (pH 9+) cause the fiber's cuticle scales to lift and lock together. This is felting, and it turns soft rugs hard and brittle.

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### **The Mechanical Risk**

Hand-knotted rugs are held together by tension. Rotating brush rolls pull at these knots, creating fuzzing and permanent structural damage.

## Part 1: Myth vs. Science

**Myth #1: Use "Pet Stain Remover" for accidents.**

**Science: False.** Check the label for enzymes. If present, do not use on wool. It will slowly dissolve the fibers, leading to bald spots months later.

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**Myth #2: Scrub stains vigorously to lift them.**

**Science: False.** Wet wool is 30% weaker than dry wool. Scrubbing breaks the fibers and causes blooming (a fuzzy, distorted area that looks like a stain but is actually texture damage).

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**Myth #3: Any "Gentle" detergent is fine.**

**Science: False.** Many gentle laundry detergents contain optical brighteners that can cause permanent yellowing on wool rugs.

## Part 2: The Clean Era Protocol

### Step A: The "Suction Only" Vacuum

**Tool:** Canister vacuum or upright with the rolling brush turned off.

**Method:** Vacuum side-to-side, not fringe-to-fringe. Never vacuum the fringe.

**Why:** The spinning bristles rip fibers; suction lifts dirt gently.

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### Step B: The WoolSafe Identification

**The Standard:** Look for the "WoolSafe Approved" logo on cleaning products.

**Why:** These products are rigorously tested for:

1. No enzymes (protease).
  2. No bleaching agents.
  3. Neutral pH (safe for natural dyes).
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### Step C: The "Absorb and Blot" (Spill Protocol)

1. **Absorb:** Place a dry white towel over the liquid. Press down. Do not rub.
  2. **Treat:** Apply a WoolSafe approved spotter (or water + 1 drop pH-neutral dish soap) to a cloth, not the rug. Dab the stain.
  3. **Rinse:** Mist with cool water to remove soap residue.
  4. **Dry:** Weigh down a stack of paper towels over the spot until fully dry.
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### Step D: The "Snip" (Maintenance)

**Scenario:** You see a long thread popping up.

**Action:** Take small scissors and cut it level with the pile. Do not pull.

## Summary for your home

### NEVER USE

Enzyme cleaners, hydrogen peroxide, or vacuums with spinning brush rolls.

### ALWAYS USE

Suction-only vacuuming and WoolSafe approved spotters.

### GOLDEN RULE

Treat wool like hair. No enzymes, no high pH, no aggressive brushing.

## Manufacturer verification data

### Stark Carpet

Warns that rotating brushes can tear fibers and cause fuzzing. Recommends turning the brush roll off or using a suction attachment.

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### The WoolSafe Organization

Confirms that household detergents often contain bleaching agents and enzymes that permanently damage wool fibers and dyes.

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### Clean Era note

We treat wool like hair. You would not wash your hair with bleach; do not wash your rug with peroxide or oxygen bleach.

## FAQ

### **Why does my rug smell like wet dog?**

Wool releases a natural sulfur odor when wet. This is normal and will dissipate as it dries.

### **Can I use a Dyson on wool?**

Only if you can turn the brush bar off. If the bristles spin, they will damage the pile over time.

### **What brands are WoolSafe approved?**

Many brands carry the logo, including specific lines from reputable eco-brands. Always check the back label for the WoolSafe mark.

## **Clean Era standard**

Clean Era uses manufacturer-compliant, science-backed protocols for natural textiles.