



Leather
RestorationCo.

Leather
the other renewable

Why you should care for your leather - the real answers

Caring enough to care

Of all the textiles and other materials used to cover the furniture we buy, leather is by far the most sustainable. If cared for with the proper cleaners, moisturisers and protectors, it can last up to 5 times longer than if you did nothing. And even if you did nothing, good quality leather will outlast fabric by about 5 times. So why don't we care more about looking after our furniture? Part of the reason might be this age of consumerism in which we've become a throw away society. We purchase budget priced leather furniture with the expectation that it will only last 5 or so years. While this attitude promotes sales and keeps the economy ticking over, it counteracts the idea of sustainability and reduction of our carbon footprint.

Keeping the pH right

Leather is skin albeit preserved skin. Nevertheless it is affected by soil, and more importantly, chemical imbalance. All substances have a pH. On the pH scale of 1-14, a pH of 7 is considered neutral. Any pH below 7 is considered acidic and above 7 is considered alkaline. After manufacture, leather has a pH of 4.5-5, which is quite acidic. If you were to test the pH of common household cleaners, many of them have a pH of 8-10. We have not found a leather cleaner below pH 6.8 and one of the most common ones in Australia is 9! So where are we going with this? When 2 substances are not similar in pH, they form a chemical reaction to balance each other and the by-product is a salt substance which is harmful to leather fibres. Another key point in pH imbalance is it is logarithmic in nature. For example, if you clean a leather that has a pH of 5 with a cleaner that has a pH of 6, you would raise the pH in the leather 10 times. If you used a leather cleaner with a pH of 7, the imbalance produced would be $10 \times 10 = 100$. A cleaner with a pH of 8 would be $100 \times 100 = 10,000$ and so on. This is why a pH balanced cleaner is so important.

Prescription drugs, body oils and perspiration change leather pH

Amazingly enough, even we as individuals can vary in pH. When our oils and perspiration get into our leather furniture, this will put the pH out of balance. If you are on medication, this will alter your body chemistry and if you don't clean your leather surfaces with a leather cleaner pH balanced for leather, the process of pH imbalance will start.

Moisture levels in leather are important

After being processed, leather has around 25% moisture content in it due to the fat-liquoring process. This moisture level can change when subjected to dry hot conditions. Having your furniture close to central heating registers will accelerate moisture loss. If moisture levels aren't maintained, the leather fibre bundles shrink and your leather becomes firmer and less flexible. Once the leather is dry enough, when flexed it will crack. This starts out as very fine surface cracks, but over time will travel further into the leather until it cracks in half. Think of your own body and your skin. If you did not moisturise it, you too would crack!

Protecting your leather topcoat

Leather protectors on the market can be just a dressing with no real protection of the leather surface. A protector should form a film on the surface of the leather to hold out unwanted oil and perspiration and it should have an anti microbial additive that will prevent bacteria, fungus and mould growth.