1981

Look to the Label

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Look to the Label

THE CLOTHING MARKET PLACE

Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University
U.S. Department of Agriculture
LOOK TO THE LABEL

Sure, you have the right to expect consumer information to appear on those clothing labels. But it's also your responsibility to know what information is required to be there.

Federal laws and regulations have been enacted for your benefit, to protect you—the consumer—in the purchase of clothing and fabric goods. So it's worth knowing what those rulings are:

THE TEXTILE FIBER PRODUCTS IDENTIFICATION ACT
This is designed to protect you from false advertising and from mislabeling of fiber content in textile products.

Labels must:
- identify the fiber by generic name (the name of the family of fibers with similar chemical composition or origin)
- give the percentage of each kind of fiber in the product
- tell who the manufacturer is (by name or registered number)
- state where the garment was processed and manufactured if it was imported.

FLAMMABLE FABRICS ACT
This act protects you from dangerously flammable clothing. Children's sleepwear, sizes 0-14, and yard goods intended for sleepwear must pass particularly stringent tests. And the labels on these sleepwear items must give precautionary instructions for preserving the fabric's flame-resistant qualities.

WOOL PRODUCTS LABELING ACT
This protects you from the fraudulent use of substitutes in manufactured wool products.

Labels must:
- tell who markets the product (by name or registered number)
- list by percentage any "new wool" (never before used in fabric), "Recycled wool" (fibers broken down and remanufactured from unused fabric or from a wool product which has been used by a consumer), and other fibers used in the garment.

FUR PRODUCTS LABELING ACT
This protects you from false advertising or misbranding of fur products.

Labels must:
## WHEN IT SAYS... IT MEANS...

(A Consumer's Guide to Care Labeling, developed by the American Apparel Manufacturer's Association)

| Machine wash | Wash, bleach, dry and press by any customary method including commercial laundering and dry cleaning |
| Home launder only | Same as above but do not use commercial laundering |
| No chlorine bleach | Do not use chlorine bleach |
| Cold wash | Use cold water from tap or cold washing machine setting (85°F or 29°C) |
| Cold rinse | Use warm water or warm washing machine setting (90-110°F or 32-43°C) |
| Warm wash | Use hot water or hot washing machine setting (140°F or 60°C) |
| Warm rinse | Remove wash load before final machine spin cycle |
| Hot wash | Use a gradually cooling or cold rinse followed by reduced spinning or use warm wash, cold rinse and a short spin cycle |
| Hot rinse | Wash alone or with like colors |
| Home launder only | Launder only by hand with gentle squeezing action |
| No bleach | Hand wash alone or with like colors |
| No bleach separately | Do not use bleach |
| No bleach separately | Permits use of other bleaches |
| No chlorine bleach | Surface-clean with damp cloth or sponge |
| Damp wipe | Dry in tumble dryer at specified setting—high, medium, low or no heat |
| Tumble dry | Same as above, but in absence of cool-down cycle remove at once when tumbling stops |
| Tumble dry Remove promptly | Hang wet and allow to dry with hand shaping only |
| Tumble dry Remove promptly | Hang damp and allow to dry |
| Drip dry | Hang dry, drip dry or dry flat only. Handle to prevent wrinkles and distortion |
| Line dry | No wring |
| No wring | No twist |
| No twist | Hang flat |
| Dry flat | Lay garment on flat surface |
| Block to dry | Maintain original size and shape while drying |
| Cool iron | Set iron at lowest setting |
| Warm iron | Set iron at medium setting |
| Hot iron | Set iron at hot setting |
| Do not iron | Do not iron or press with heat |
| Do not iron | Iron or press with steam |
| Steam iron | Dampen garment before ironing |
| Iron damp | Dry-clean only |
| Dry-clean only | Garment should be dry-cleaned only, including self-service |
| Professionally dry-clean only* | Do not use self-service drycleaning |
| No dry-clean | Use recommended care instructions. No dry-cleaning materials to be used |

- give the species of the animal used and its country of origin
- tell whether any paws, tails, or reused fur were included
- state if the fur was dyed, colored, or bleached
- tell who manufactured it (either by name or registered number)
PERMANENT CARE LABELING RULING

This regulation deals with care labels on products that need cleaning care for ordinary use. The textile products covered by this act are clothing, draperies, curtains, linens, piece goods, yarn, carpets and rugs, and upholstered furniture.

Any person or organization that directs or controls the manufacture or importation of these products is covered by the regulation.

According to the ruling, labels must:

- be attached so they can be easily seen or found
- stay fastened and legible during the life of the product
- state what regular care is needed
- be delivered upon purchaser's request with the sale of piece goods
- specify hand or machine wash and water temperature
- state method of drying and temperature to be used
- state if ironing is needed on a regular basis
- specify if products will be harmed by bleaches
- indicate any other special warnings such as "Do Not Dryclean" or "Dry Flat"

So What Does Care Labeling Mean to You?

It means you have the right to expect:

- that care instructions will be supplied in clothing or given to you with yard goods
- that those instructions will be well-defined
- that you'll get satisfactory results when you follow the care instructions

But it also means you have a responsibility to:

- follow those care instructions
- attach care labels to home-sewn garments
- notify store managers when your consumer rights have been violated and/or complain in writing to the manufacturer
- tell manufacturers when their care recommendations are confusing or appear to damage your garments
- share your ideas on labeling with the Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C. 20580

INTERNATIONAL CARE LABELING

As modern technology advances international trade, the United States and other countries are importing more and more garments. So to help bridge language barriers that might arise, a system of symbols has been established to indicate clothing care recommendations.

When these symbols appear on clothing sold in the United States, an English explanation must appear too, according to the Permanent Care Label Ruling.

The five basic symbols for textile care are:

- ▲ washing
- △ bleaching
- ◆ drying
- □ pressing or ironing
- ◆ drycleaning

Color is part of this system too:

red = stop! Do not carry out whatever action the symbol represents
amber = some caution is necessary
green = no special precaution is needed

The system specifies temperatures for washing, drying, or ironing garments.

An X means you should avoid the method of care that's shown.

Variations of these symbol instructions include:

- hand wash
- hang up soaking
- dry on a flat surface

OTHER INFORMATION - NOT REQUIRED BY LAW

Manufacturers often voluntarily supply information you can use to make wise clothing buys. So study those garment tags. Look for seals or statements that might tell about the garment's:

- maximum shrinkage (Has a brand-name finish been applied, or. in the case of cotton or linen, has the product been sanforized?)
- colorfastness
- special finishes (Tags may indicate treatments that have been applied which repel water, prevent wrinkles or stains, increase wear or change the appearance of the garment.)
- guarantees or warranties

For more information contact Linda Manikowske, Extension clothing and textiles specialist. Prepared by Rae Reilly and Jacquelyn Yep and reprinted with permission of Iowa Cooperative Extension Service. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with USDA, Hollis D. Hall, Director of CES, SDSU, Brookings, Education programs and materials offered without regard to age, race, color, religion, sex, handicap, or national origin. An Equal Opportunity Employer.

File: 13.1—5,000 printed at estimated 4 cents each — 10-81mb—261.