

no 7
abn-no
5960308



SERIES
371
10-18
IRO
AUSTRALIA

DIVISION OF BUILDING, CONSTRUCTION AND ENGINEERING
information sheet

Sheet No. 10-18 August 1977



MOULD GROWTH IN HOUSES

Mould growth, which causes unsightly discolouration of surfaces upon which it occurs, requires humid conditions in order to thrive. Conditions which favour high humidities on wall and ceiling surfaces therefore encourage mould growth. Measures which are helpful in mould control are those which exclude or remove excess moisture from the house, and those which increase the surface temperatures within the rooms.

When mould growth is a problem it is therefore important to check such things as the drainage of the site, the natural ventilation of the house, and the effectiveness of the removal of steam from the kitchen, bathroom and laundry.

Moisture carried in the warm air of a kitchen may cause no trouble in that room, but upon reaching colder areas in the house, it may add to the risk of condensation. Even without obvious condensation, the higher humidity resulting from the entry of additional moisture-laden air will increase the risk of mould growth. The importance of venting steam before it escapes into other parts of the house, and the need for effective ventilation throughout, is clear.

Heating and insulation are both important. In a number of cases of badly affected ceilings brought to the attention of the Division, the mould growth has shown a distinct pattern, with clear areas corresponding to the position of ceiling joists. This happens because the insulating effect of the timber is sufficient to protect the plaster immediately below the joist by maintaining a slightly higher surface temperature. It could be expected that the installation of insulation in such cases would offer reasonable prospects of control over mould growth.

A dilute solution of a household bleach with a sodium hypochlorite base has been found useful for the

immediate treatment of mould. Such bleaches, which are easily recognised by their characteristic smell of chlorine, will kill the mould and also bleach the discolouration it causes. Suitable bleaches would include 'White King' and Varechina. One part of bleach diluted with three parts of water should be used and the surface sponged over with water about 20 minutes later. Carry out the dilution in a plastic or glass vessel and protect the skin, eyes, fabrics, etc. from splashes whilst handling the concentrated or diluted solution. Before applying the solution the effect of the bleach upon the particular paint or wall-paper should be tested using a small inconspicuous area. The bleach does not have any long-lasting effect so it is not a substitute for attention to the control measures outlined.

When repainting becomes necessary, and a high resistance to reinfestation is required, a zinc oxide latex paint should be used where a flat finish is preferred. (Your paint dealer can show you various suitable brands.) In rooms such as the kitchen and bathroom, advantage can be taken of the mould resistance which is a feature of ordinary gloss enamel paints.

For wall coverings and mould stains, see Information Sheet No. 10-34.

Disclaimer

The information in this and other Information Sheets is advisory, it is provided in good faith and not claimed to be an exhaustive treatment of the relevant subject. Further professional advice might need to be obtained before taking any action based on the information provided.