



Useful information from The Camping and Caravanning Club

Winter care for your caravan

A guide to looking after your caravan from The Camping and Caravanning Club



Using good quality, purpose-made cleaners will help protect your caravan during the winter.

This Data Sheet is one of a series produced by The Camping and Caravanning Club on key camping and caravanning topics.

These are available as downloadable Acrobat files, free to all campers and caravanners.

This Data Sheet originally appeared in *Camping and Caravanning*, the Club's monthly magazine.

It is just one of the many benefits of membership. Club members also benefit from access to over 90 UK Club Sites, Carefree, the Club's international travel service, and a wide range of other, exclusive Member Services.

You can join the Club on-line, or by calling 024 7685 6797, or at any of our UK Club Sites.

Although caravanning can be an all-year-round activity, the majority of caravanners put their caravan away over the winter period.

Whether the caravan is stored at home, on a site, outside or under cover there are a number of things that should be done to ensure that your caravan remains in tip-top condition.

You will want to make sure that when you come to prepare your caravan for the next season you can do so without having to spend money rectifying something that could have been avoided by taking appropriate precautions at the beginning of winter.

Before looking into what you should be doing to help protect

what has been a large financial investment – and perhaps more important, your leisure lifeline – consider what you are going to do with the caravan. Is it going to be used over the winter months? Are there any insurance implications? How should it be stored?

Take time to consider what and when jobs should be

done to safeguard the caravan. Here are some suggestions to ensure your caravan survives the winter without adverse effect.

Start with the skin

As with our own body, you will need to ensure that the 'skin' is kept clean. If you don't, various problems can and will arise.

In winter it is

inevitable that your caravan will succumb to the perils of rotting leaves and other matter that, if not removed, may lead to damage.

Atmospheric debris and bird droppings make a caravan unsightly and need to be removed on a regular basis.

Cleaning the outside of the 'van not only prolongs its life but improves the visual aesthetics as well.

Use a proprietary caravan cleaning agent, available from most good caravan and camping accessory shops, and clean all external surfaces.

Be careful when cleaning the caravan roof. Leaning across the roof may cause permanent damage to the roofing structure and seals.

Safety points

Some of the tasks that you will be carrying out could result in personal injury if you don't follow some basic common sense rules.

Supporting your caravan on bricks is not recommended, particularly when you need to gain access under the caravan. Bricks do not perform well as supports.

Some cleaning products may give warnings on the labels. Ensure you read these and keep the products out of reach of children.

Do not over stretch when standing on stepladders and get someone to support the ladder at all times.



At the end of the season remove all water drain plugs, including the toilet flushing water, and store the filter inside the 'van.

If you have access to a pressure washer, use with care and avoid directing the spray on the seals.

Once clean, apply a good proprietary polish to the external surface, again available from accessory shops. This will help to protect it from the elements.

Clean all windows – inside and out.

Smear a light cover of silicon grease around the window rubbers to prevent sticking and potential damage to the rubber.

Care of your tyres

If your caravan is parked in the same position for several months the tyres may develop flat spots.

To avoid this happening, either remove the wheels or raise them off the ground. But, before doing either check with your insurance company that you will remain insured.

Some insurance companies insist you must have a wheel clamp fitted when the caravan is not in use – you can't fit one if the wheels are not there. They may also object to some types of winter wheels that

interface with the chassis hub.

If you can't remove the wheels move the caravan occasionally to reposition the tyre load on a different part of the tyre.

While the wheels are removed take them to your nearest tyre specialist. They will give an expert inspection of the tyres and re-balance the wheels as well.

Ensuring your caravan wheels are balanced will help the handling of your unit and reduce tyre wear.

Other components

Greasing moving parts is essential to aid their performance.

Grease nipples can generally be found in the over-ride mechanism (refer to your caravan manual). These should be cleaned and the grease replenished as required.

Corner steadies have a rotating lead screw. Apply light grease along its length.

Other parts and linkages in the assembly should also be given a light grease covering.

The water system

Never leave water in

the caravan pipes over the winter.

Find the drainage point positions from your caravan handbook (there could be more than one) and always drain both the hot and cold systems.

When leaving site for the last time before winter drain the system down before moving off.

The 'van's rocking motion on the way home will disturb any residual water, ensuring that none remains in the pipes.

Remove the hot water system drain plug or toggle tap on the heater unit.

Some systems also have separate drainage points at the front or back of the 'van.

Leave kitchen, washroom and shower taps in the open position.

Remove the water filter and clean around the inlet port.

If the filter is out of date throw it away and replace it as per the supplier's recommendations.

If you intend keeping the filter store it together with the drain plugs in a safe place inside the caravan.

Additionally, unscrew the shower head and lower it to below the inlet point to drain any excess water from the feed pipe.

Ensure that all waste water has drained away and that the cap is in place to prevent spiders crawling in.

Taking care of upholstery

Remove all bedding, cushions and pillows and if you can, store them in your home.

Remove the seats and back cushions and place them, end on, in the centre walkway of the caravan.

Open all internal doors and cupboards to give plenty of circulating air.

Looking after power systems

Switch off all internal electrical switches, remove plugs and check the fuses. Replace any that have blown.

If you store your caravan away from home remove the leisure battery and store it in a dry place.

Whether or not you remove it, recharge the battery every five to six weeks.

Check that gas appliances and the gas bottle regulators are all turned off.

Occasionally during the winter it is a good idea to heat the 'van for an hour or two using the space heater to drive any accumulated damp away.

Remember if you use butane it will begin to freeze when temperatures fall below four degrees centigrade, so you will need to use propane instead.

Check the external electrics

Road lights are an important and a legal requirement. Remove the external light lenses and clean both the lens (inside and out) and the electrical contacts.

Cover the edge of the lens with petroleum jelly before refitting. This should prevent further problems during the winter.

Always remember your own personal limitations. Consult a qualified electrician if in doubt or where you find problems that you cannot correct yourself.

Check the 12N and 12S leads and plugs. Spray the contacts with a light coating of WD40.

Looking inside

Having your caravan shut up for a long period may generate water molecules in the atmosphere inside.

Positioning moisture traps in the main area and wash room will help to absorb these.

Remember to empty the traps on a regular basis.

Opening doors and windows from time to time will also keep your caravan aired.

Give the kitchen and bathroom a good clean especially around the cooker and inside the fridge. This will prevent mould forming during the winter months.

Attend to the toilet

Remove the toilet cassette and thoroughly clean it. Drain and flush any water left in the holding tank.

If you have added an agent to the flushing water and you wish to save it, use an old squash bottle but don't forget to remove the label and mark it up as 'Toilet Flushing Water'.

Lubricate the toilet valve with silicon grease and leave it slightly open to prevent sticking when you next use it.

And finally...

Consider having your caravan's annual service during the winter. Workshops tend to be less busy.

Whatever jobs you do before winter the easier it will be to prepare your caravan at the beginning of the next season.

Many jobs will need to be carried out in reverse when next using the caravan.

Leave the toilet waste tank partially open to prevent it sticking shut over the winter period.

