

Processing Today's Rayon

The return of Rayon Fabric to the fashion scene in recent years has been met with enthusiasm on the part of the consumer and something far less than enthusiasm from her dry cleaner. Rayon, which was the first man made fiber, is manufactured from natural cellulose from wood pulp, and exhibits many of the properties of a natural fiber. Both by itself and in blends, it is made into a large variety of sheens, sheers, textures and overall appearances. In most cases, the dyes are stable to solvent, water and most spotting chemicals. It is not overly heat sensitive and accepts sizing well. Care labels run the full gamut from dry clean only to wet wash only and everything in between. In many cases, the fiber with which Rayon is blended determines the care label. Pure Rayon usually wet cleans well in cold water, but in some cases exhibits shrinkage and wrinkling. Rayon and blends respond quite well to normal drycleaning and finishing procedures, providing the dyes used are stable to solvent.

So far, Rayon behaves no differently than any other fiber encountered in our drycleaning plants. The catch, as you have experienced, is its tendency to water mark. Whether the cause is a sizing disturbance, dye change, or whatever, the problem is very real whether caused by rain, a spill or wet side spotting. The following procedures have been found to be effective in many cases.

If wet side spotting is called for on Rayon or blends, first test the article for color fastness on an unexposed seam. If it is ok, proceed on the stain. When it is removed, flush the spotter with steam, dry rather thoroughly with air and vacuum and apply Stamford SSS as a leveling agent. Allow to level 10-20 minutes and dryclean; do not allow leveled area to dry prior to cleaning. Obviously, spray spotters should not be used. Dry side spotters should not be steamed. Flush with volatile organic cleaner or dryclean. In many cases, the garment will be free of water marks using these procedures.

Dark colors, usually the royal blues, kelly greens and dark reds, can exhibit a darker area where they were wetted with water, following drycleaning. If the contrast is not too great, repeated light fogging of the area with steam and air dryings may remove them. If the marks persist, try fogging the area lightly with steam, apply leveling agent solution and re-clean immediately. You may have to do this 2 or 3 times. When all else fails, an almost sure-fire solution is total immersion in water.

Of course, if the garment had to be spotted on the wet side and has a washable care label, by all means follow this label and wetclean using Stamford Wetclean. If the garment is marked dry clean only and still has water marks after trying the above procedures, now is the time to get a customer release. Normally, all that is needed is to immerse the garment in clear, cold water and dry as dictated by the garment and fabric; either tumble, susie, hang or flat. Test the fabric for color fastness to water before proceeding. If it is two piece, do both, as a slight overall darkening may occur.

When spotting light and pastel rayons, the darkening usually does not occur, but a hard, brown ring may appear at the edge of the wetted area, especially if the garment has been allowed to dry overnight. In this case, break down the ring with steam, feather and dry rather thoroughly with air and vacuum, apply leveling agent solution and dryclean.

These procedures are not fool proof, but they may help you with some problem garments. The DLI is in contact with the Rayon producers and hopefully their discussions will result in more serviceable Rayon garments in the future.