

ACCESSORY REVIEW

Put your mitts up

With so many wash mitts around, the sponge market has all but dried up. We test eight products

As we all know, cleaning a caravan by hand is a long, laborious job, so we're always keen to try anything that claims to speed things up. But can wash mitts really be better than the time-honoured sponge?

According to their fans, mitts offer two distinct advantages. The hand void inside and the material from which the mitts are made give them far better properties of water retention



than sponges. So, you can clean larger areas without having to bend down to your bucket to wet your sponge all that often. This saves time, as well as your back.

Mitts are also supposed to be better against tough dirt and stains. Standard synthetic sponges are poor in this respect because they're too thick and soft for hand pressure to be really effective. Mitts are thinner, so it's possible to effectively apply pressure and be able



to scrub. And, in recent years, mitts have become even better against tough dirt, thanks to the use of microfibre pads. Microfibre comprises very fine strands of synthetic fibre woven together. This composition makes the material very effective for cleaning and highly absorbent.

To decide which was the best mitt on test, we tried each on dirt

and grime. We noted their performance when dry and wet. We also weighed each product, before use and after ten seconds in a bucket of water, to see how much liquid had been absorbed. In addition to the cleaning performance of each mitt, we considered how securely it stays on your hand, and whether it is machine washable, and its value for money.

HALFORDS GENUINE SHEEPSKIN MITT

Price £7.99 Tel 08457 626 625
Web www.halfords.com

Halfords is playing the high-quality traditional card with this. Instead of baffling us with science and talking about microfibres, the chain is promoting the fact that this is made from genuine sheepskin. The first benefit is an amazing degree of water retention; the weight increases by almost 750g after a brief immersion in water, so you won't be reaching into your bucket often. The sheepskin is kind to surfaces, too, which makes particularly well suited for polishing. Nevertheless, it doesn't work as well as microfibre.

Verdict Good quality conventional product, but it lacks cleaning 'bite'.
Rating ★★☆☆☆



KENT LADIES' WASH MITT

Price TBA (product available soon)
Tel 01892 837 070
Web www.carcare.co.uk

This mitt is 'one for the ladies', at least it is according to the manufacturer. And quite possibly it is – and not only because the pink colour won't appeal to everybody.

This is a cracking mitt. A glove sewn onto the back is quite comfortable and makes this very easy to use. Meanwhile, elasticated straps hold the product firmly in on your hand.

However, men may find this too snug for their comfort.

But it is in the cleaning performance where this mitt really excels. The microfibre 'noodles' have an amazing grip on dirt and grease, even if used dry. And for tackling really tough marks, there is a scrubbing gauze on the rear of the mitt.

Verdict The cleaning performance is first rate, and it will be comfy for all but the beefiest hands.
Rating ★★★★★



Final touch

You may find cleaning your caravan so easy after using one of these mitts, that you'll have energy to polish it as well. Polishing removes oxidised paint and scratches, and returns vital oils and gloss to the paint. In our October 2006 issue, we tested ten polishes and awarded our Editor's Choice rosette to Care-Avan. It worked wonders on our 20-year-old Whin. The panel we tested shone as it had not since 1992. Our 2006 Lunar Quasar also benefited from the Care-Avan treatment. The polish left no white residue and was easy to apply and buff up.

By far the best value for money on the test was Fenwick's Superior Bobby Dazzler. This is the ultimate lazy way add one capful to a bucket of water and pour it over the van. If the water in your area is hard, dry the surface with a chamois leather.

The reasonably glossy finish repels water well, and Fenwick's claims it is safe to use on Perspex windows. However, we found it was not that successful on the Whin's UV-damaged paintwork.

Care-Avan
Price £3.99 per 500 ml bottle
Tel 07771 977 746

Fenwick's Superior Bobby Dazzler
Price £6.95 for 1-litre bottle
Tel 0800 915 891

MEGIUARS LAMBSWOOL WASH MITT

Price £9.99
Tel 0870 241 6696
Web www.meguiars.co.uk

Cynics might say that this is simply a differently coloured version of Halfords' sheepskin mitt, with a new name and price. But they'd soon change their minds if they tried it.

Although we cannot think of any reason why lambswool should be any more effective against dirt than sheepskin, our tests show that, in this case, it is. In fact, this is the only conventional mitt that really rivals the microfibre



products for dirt-shifting power. Additionally, a scrubbing gauze on the rear will help you clear away dead bugs, too.

Unfortunately, the mitt is too loose and stiff to be extremely wide, so it is difficult to generate any hand pressure. **Verdict** The best non-microfibre dirt-shifter in our test.
Rating ★★★★★

METRO MICROFIBRE CLEANSING MITT



Price £3.99
Tel 01488 689 400
Web www.saxonind.co.uk

This may not win an award for the best-looking mitt, but it is a good all-rounder. The secret is the quality of microfibre used. Even when dry, the mitt drags noticeably over dirt and stains – a sure sign that it's working. When wet, its performance is stunning. It's so good, even with just plain tap water, that you'll probably never bother using a chemical shampoo again.

Unlike many of the mitts on test here, this one doesn't have an abrasive scrub pad on its rear, but we didn't miss it as the material bites into dirt and stains very well. The only slight nigglers are that it isn't machine washable and its water retention is poor in comparison to the others.

Verdict Much better performance than its appearance and price would suggest.
Rating ★★★★★

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HALFORDS COTTON WASH MITT

Price £3.49
Tel 01892 837 625
Web www.halfords.com

This looks like a mop and works much like one, too, which means that its water retention properties are phenomenal: when dry it weighed 142g but after a dunk in the bucket it weighed well over 1kg. The water level in the bucket had gone down noticeably, too.

For general cleaning, this is a pretty good all-rounder but tough stains are too challenging

for it. The mop-like strands don't grip tough dirt and the mitt is too thick for you to apply effective hand pressure to pull out. It is also fairly tricky to pull

this mitt onto your hand. **Verdict** The best water retainer here, but its dirt-shifting ability is poor.
Rating ★★☆☆☆



KENT 2-IN-1 WASH MITT

Price £3.99
Tel 01892 837 070
Web www.carcare.co.uk

This is a product that gets everything right. The microfibre noodles simply have to be used to be

believed. You will know when old stains or grease are encountered, even if you can't see them, because the mitt really drags as it pulls the dirt off the surface.

The cleaning power of the 'noodles' is so impressive that you may never need to use the scrubbing gauze on the rear. This mitt also allows speedy cleaning, thanks to phenomenal water retention which only slightly trails that of Halfords' Cotton Wash Mitt. The very reasonable price is an added bonus.

Verdict This mitt gets top marks for its cleaning performance at a budget price.
Rating ★★★★★



KENT SPONGE MITT

Price £1.49
Tel 01892 837 070
Web www.caravan.com

If you have a strong preference for the simple and familiar, such as a synthetic yellow sponge, you may simply be unable to imagine cleaning a caravan with anything else at all. In that case this is the cleaning mitt for you.

Essentially, this product is comprised of two pieces of inch-thick, standard sponge sewn together, and although that may seem like a cop-out, in reality it works rather well. Perhaps because of its large surface area, it holds a



surprising amount of water. When dry, it weighs in at a barely perceptible 30g. However, after a brief dunk in a bucket, the weight balloons to almost 600g.

Another definite bonus of the sponge is that it clings to your hand effectively, meaning that the mitt stays securely in place despite the fact that it has no elasticated cuff. **Verdict** This is better than a conventional sponge and it's very low-priced.
Rating ★★★★★

Accessories

MEGIUARS SUPER-THICK MICROFIBRE WASH MITT

Price £9.95
Tel 0870 241 6696
Web www.meguiars.co.uk

One of the most expensive mitts in the group, which is perhaps to be expected from a premium brand such as Meguiars. But is the extra cost all about paying for a name, or is it reflective of superior

cleaning properties? Well, the microfibre is noticeably gentler to the touch than the materials used by Metro and Kent. But that doesn't keep it from working just as effectively, wet or dry, against dirt and stains in our test. Meguiars obviously intends this to be used on a long-term basis because it's machine washable. Our only

negative comment is the sloppy fit caused by the wide cuff. **Verdict** It's good, but the price is hard to justify.
Rating ★★★★★



NEXT MONTH Battery chargers