

Tips and Tricks for Awning Maintenance with Dr. Dometic

An awning is the front porch of your RV. It helps fill your living room with gentle breezes on a warm day...is your outdoor dining room with a full view of fireflies...and your sanctuary during a gentle rain. This versatile accessory is one of the best investments you can make in your RV lifestyle.

Patio, window, door and slideout awnings protect your furniture and draperies from sun damage, allow open windows during light rain showers and keep your RV cooler. They can provide long-term comfort and performance with simple, routine maintenance and cleaning.

“Awnings are great additions to your RV,” says Dr. Dometic, RV enthusiast and expert. “Following a few easy tricks and tips can keep them colorful and standing tall for years.”

For safe and secure travel, make sure the awning is properly rolled up, in a locked travel position and that travel latches are down. Verify that the push buttons are locked in the prepunched holes, and lock the cam lever. Also, tighten all adjustment knobs and make sure the top and bottom bracket screws are tight.

Periodical cleanings will ensure a beautiful, ready-to-use awning when you arrive at your destination. Awnings come in two fabrics – cloth-type acrylic and vinyl – that must be cleaned differently. Acrylic awnings have the color woven into the fabric. They are water repellent, but not waterproof. To clean an acrylic awning, simply hose it off occasionally and let it dry. Do not scrub it, as this could remove its water retardant finish.

“To remove a nasty grease spot, try using K2r[®] Stain Remover,” Dr. Dometic advises. “It’s tough enough to get out the stain, but won’t damage the fabric in the process.”

Acrylic is a woven cloth that allows air to circulate through the fabric so dew and rain can dry quickly. However, you should avoid touching the underside of an acrylic awning when it is wet. Touching it will break the surface tension and allow seepage through the fabric. If it is necessary to roll up an awning while it is wet, unroll it as soon as the weather allows. It should be completely dry before rolling it up again to avoid mildew.

While a vinyl awning is mildew resistant, mildew can still form on the dirt and dust that sticks to the awning. To avoid these problems, use a mixture of a quarter-cup dish soap, a quarter-cup bleach and five gallons of fresh water. Soap the open awning with this mixture then roll it up to soak for five minutes, applying the mixture to the bottom of the awning as you roll. Next, open the awning and hose it off with fresh water on the top and bottom. After the awning is completely dry, roll it up. To remove a grease spot from a vinyl awning, use only soap and water. Do not use household cleaners, mildew removers or hard bristle brushes.

Once you are parked and ready to enjoy your patio awning, keep a few things in mind while setting up. To avoid water pooling, lower one end of the awning for proper water runoff. Before opening the entry door, be sure the patio or door awning is extended high enough so the door won't rub against it.

Dr. Dometic warns, "Be aware of the weather when you have your awning open. If you're expecting heavy or prolonged wind or rain or if you will be leaving the awning unattended, it's best to roll it up. Damage as a result of weather is most likely not covered by warranty."

Taking a few minutes for some simple maintenance steps will keep your awnings looking and performing great. With a little TLC they will provide years of convenient shading, protection and enjoyment that all awnings promise... including firefly shows from the comfort of your portable front porch.

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