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SHADING or PILE REVERSAL

Shading or Pile Reversal is the term used when a carpet or rug seems to change color in certain areas.

Carpet pile has a natural slope in one direction when it is made. As long as the tufts slant in the same direction, the carpet has a uniform color throughout. However, some of the tufts may slant against this normal pile lay, causing a variation in the way light is reflected from the napped surface.



When you look at the first picture of this runner, it looks like there are 3 humps on the bottom that are darker than the rest of the rug.

Looking at it from the other direction, the 3 humps appear to be lighter. This type of shading is known as 'Watermarking' as it appears the rug is or has been wet.

On the dark side you are viewing the ends of the fibers and on the light side you are seeing light reflecting off the side of the fibers.

Shading occurs most frequently on dense, deep, velvety, cut pile carpets.

Some, like in the photo, do not have a traceable cause. They just appear. The new Denver airport that had an installation before it opened. Within a couple of weeks they had major watermarking issues throughout. After much bickering and finger pointing, the carpet was torn out and replaced. Within a few weeks they reappeared in the exact same places. No one knows why.

Other shading issues can be determined. Changes usually develop gradually in traffic areas or in front of frequently used chairs or sofas.

"Pooling" refers to smaller, usually round shaded areas that resemble a puddle. (see photo below) These are frequently found at staircases where the foot must turn or rotate to enter or exit the stairs.

On new installations, installers have been known to butt sections of carpet running in the opposite direction. This would be immediately apparent and fixable.

Some shading issues can be caused by a rug cleaner. For instance, fragile fibers, such as silk, must be raked or brushed after cleaning to set the fibers while they dry.

Little can be done to prevent or correct shading. It can be slowed by vacuuming or brushing the pile in one direction during daily or weekly maintenance. Unfortunately, the shading tends to reappear the first time someone steps on the rug.

Generally, like the airport, you have to live with it.

