

Clearing the Air

Australian tea-tree-oil-based Kanberra Gel is a natural way to control mold, mildew and bacteria — and associated bad odors

After a while, RVs tend to take on an unpleasant odor that can affect the joy of living on the road. Natural odors from wood, carpet, upholstery, cooking and bedding exacerbated by mold, mildew and/or bacteria, can really foul the air. The problem is compounded when the trailer is locked up in storage and subject to reduced airflow and temperature extremes. Masking the odor with products that emit fragrances is not a long-term solution — and the typically strong artificial smell may be worse than the inherent odor. A better solution is to neutralize all the offenders with Kanberra Gel, a product I ran into at The Rally in Syracuse, New York, last summer.

Kanberra Gel caught my attention because I was living in a used fifth-wheel at The Rally supplied by a local dealer. It was pretty stinky inside — an odor all too familiar, commonly present in used RVs. After hearing the sales pitch, I challenged the company representative to a test. The idea that most of the bad odor would dissipate within the claimed 24 hours was hard to believe, so I set up a 2-ounce container of the gel in the living room. Sure enough, this stuff really worked. While the smell was not completely gone within 24 hours, occupants were no longer hit with strong odors when entering the rig. After five days, the inside was free of musty odors.

The key ingredient is pharmaceutical-grade Australian tea tree oil. Kanberra Gel is formulated by blending Australian and lemon-scented tea tree

oil. As the natural antiseptic properties of the tea tree oils become airborne through evaporation, the air absorbs the oils. The air then circulates throughout the interior, lands on any sources of odor, like mold and mildew, and neutralizes them on contact.

To test the effectiveness of the Kanberra Gel in larger areas, a 4-ounce container was set up in a stationary house living room and another one placed in a bedroom. The house is in an area with a moist climate and suffered from a musty odor when closed up. I also put a sample cup in a Jeep Wrangler that's used as a dinghy and stored most of the time. By the end of the three-month test about 70 percent of the gel was gone from both 4-ounce containers and just about all the gel was evaporated from the Jeep. The results were impressive; musty odors were gone in all three places and the only perceptible fragrance, which was pleasant, was in the Jeep — attributable to close quarters and limited airflow. The effect in the Jeep was regulated by closing the container periodically, depending on how long the vehicle was in storage. The recommended procedure is to remove the container lid for the first two or three days to put the gel in shock mode. After that the diffuser lid will slow down evaporation. A pump spray (8 ounces, \$19.99) is available to jumpstart the results in severe conditions.

According to the company, the gel should completely evaporate in three to eight weeks and from there the residual effect lasts up to 45 days. Specific conditions will influence the process,



After a couple of months, the Kanberra Gel in the sample container placed in a Jeep Wrangler was almost completely evaporated. The gel continued to control musty odors.

but it's nice to have a product that generally over-delivers.

The recommended "dosage" is one 2-ounce container for use in RVs up to 30 feet; two for RVs up to 45 feet. If three or more showers are taken each day, add another 2-ounce container to compensate for the added humidity. The gel is all natural and safe for people and pets.

Two-ounce containers sell for \$19.99 with a number of larger sizes priced accordingly. Refilling from a 24-ounce pouch (\$100) with a twist-off cap is the most economical use of the product. Kanberra Gel is not inexpensive but your nose — and RV — will thank you. 🚗

Kanberra Gel

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SMELLING FRESH » Kanberra Gel is available in a number of sizes but it's more cost-effective to refill with the 100-ounce pouch.