

## Residential Housing Abbreviated Mold and Moisture Checklist for Real Estate Agents

---

Molds can create serious problems in a home. They can cause structural damage and be a threat to the health of occupants. These health threats are created by mold spores that cause allergic reactions or more serious problems.

So how does one come to expect that mold may be a problem in the home? In the absence of actually seeing the mold, the smell is the most telling signal of a problem. In many cases one smells the problem long before there is visual confirmation.

Mold needs oxygen, a food source, the correct temperature range, and moisture in order to thrive.

Moisture is often the factor we can manipulate most easily to overcome mold problems. The short checklist below offers points a real estate agent might consider in determining whether a home has a moisture/mold problem. This checklist is by no means exhaustive. A more complete checklist is available from Clemson Extension Service. Request HL 235 Home Management Checklist: Preventing Home Moisture Damage.

In all instances where there is excess moisture in a house, the most important thing to do is to determine the source of the water and eliminate that source.

OK	Needs Correction	
___	___	1. Is ground around house graded (and inorganic ground cover placed) to provide a downhill slope away from house in ALL directions? Ideally, the grade away from foundation walls shall fall a minimum of 6 inches vertical inches within the first 10 [horizontal] feet. If that is impossible, are drains or swales provided to ensure drainage away from the structure?
___	___	2. Are gutters and down spouts connected to drains to avoid dumping roof water at the base of the foundation wall? Connect down spouts to drains that empty at least 10 feet away from tile house, downhill.
___	___	3. Are foundation vents left open year round? Do they work?
___	___	4. If there is an air conditioning system, does the condensate drain pipe slope for proper drainage? Does the condensate drain pipe empty at least 10 feet away from the house, down hill in all directions away from the house? The gallons of water an air conditioner can remove daily from inside air should not be allowed to drain or stand near the house. Check drain pipe periodically to be sure it is not plugged--water should drain freely.
___	___	5. Is there a working exhaust fan in the kitchen and the bathroom that is vented to the outside?
___	___	6. Are the counter tops around sinks in kitchen, bathroom, and laundry caulked to prevent water damage to nearby building materials?
___	___	7. Is the house free of any leaks, water stains, or evidence of mildew or decay from water supply pipes where they enter a floor or wall, or from waste drain pipes (dishwashers, ice makers, commodes, tubs, sinks, clothes washers, laundry, showers) where they go through a wall or floor? Check behind insulation, inside cabinets, under and behind appliances.
___	___	8. Is the clothes dryer vented to the outside (not into a crawl space, basement, or attic)?
___	___	9. Is the tub or shower caulked to prevent water from damaging walls and wood structures?
___	___	10. Is the air conditioner properly sized for the area in which it is used? Air conditioners have two functions: (1) to cool air temperature (called sensible load), and (2) to remove moisture from air (called latent load). If too much of the total air conditioning load (sensible + latent) is designed to handle the sensible load (cooling) the air conditioner will not run long enough to remove

excess moisture from the air (latent load). Sometimes with high efficiency units, the home cools quickly and the unit shuts off before sufficient moisture has been removed from the home.

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 11. Are heating and/or cooling ducts in attic tight fitting and leak-free, well insulated (to R-13 minimum), taped, and sealed with mastic? Is insulation dry? Are the insides of ducts dry? Leaky ducts as well as improperly installed or wet insulation can lead to condensation, mold, decay, and health risks.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 12. Are there water spots on ceilings or walls? Newly formed spots may indicate a leaky roof, or inadequate flashing or caulking around chimneys, windows, doors, or skylights.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 13. Can air freely circulate from room to room? If not, a ceiling fan or portable fan may be a good suggestion to help move air to keep surfaces dry.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 14. Are closets (clothes and others) arranged to allow air movement? If musty odor occurs, leave closet doors open, or install louvered doors to allow better air flow. Vinyl-covered wire shelving may also help air circulation.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 15. When you inspect the attic, are soffit vents on underside of the roof overhang unblocked by attic insulations Light coming through vents into attic indicates vents are not blocked. Free air flow is required to allow moisture to escape and to keep attic moisture levels down.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 16. Is attic wood (rafters, gable walls, roof sheathing) free of any areas darkened by mildew or mold? Darkened wood may indicate excessive moisture levels in attic.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 17. Is the attic dry and fresh smelling? Damp and musty smells indicate excess moisture and fungi growth.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 18. Are nail heads and nearby surfaces in attic, interior of house, or crawl space free of rusty streaks? If rusty, reduce the moisture level in that area. When building, use galvanized nails to prevent rusting nailheads. Inspect regularly to identify and repair **any** roof leaks.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 19. In a crawl space or basement house, are all wood and other building materials free of mold, mildew, or discoloration from water stain? Stains may indicate a need to reduce moisture levels. A musty odor indicates mold is present, even if it is not visible.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 20. Are heating and cooling ducts in crawl space or an unconditioned basement tight fitting and free from leaks, well insulated (to R-13 minimum), taped and sealed with mastic? Is insulation dry? Are the insides of ducts dry? Leaky ducts as well as improperly installed or wet insulation can lead to condensation, mold, decay, and health risks, as well as decreased insulating value.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 21. If a crawl space house is damp inside, is there an effective moisture barrier in place to cover all or part of the crawl space surface?. If the crawl space has standing water or requires a moisture barrier, see Extension leaflets, HL 252 "Controlling External Water Problem for Residences".

**Revision by B. R. Crosby - Original document, HL 235 prepared by Dr. Linda L. Redmann - July 2002**

The Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or disability and is an equal opportunity employer. Clemson University Cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture and South Carolina Counties. Issued in Furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914.