News Column – Donna Krug, District Director and Family & Consumer Science Agent, Cottonwood Extension District.

Flooding Recovery Continued

Since the rains have continued for another week, the water table in our area continues to rise. A one-page fact sheet from North Dakota State University, titled, "Dealing with Continuing Basemen Seepage" does a good job of describing the process through remediation. I'll use my column space to share the most pertinent information that was written by Kenneth Hellevang, Extension Engineer.

Of course by now, the extended period of water setting in basements has made mold growth a real concern. Mold growth, which is a health hazard, is a concern any time high humidity or damp materials exist. Wet or damp materials will mold in one to three days, depending on temperature. Mold spores, which are like mold "seeds" are in the air everywhere, so the only method to prevent mold growth is to keep things dry or remove them from the damp area. Remove porous materials such as cardboard boxes, papers, carpet, rugs and clothes to keep them from becoming moldy. Chlorine bleach is a biocide that will kill existing mold, but it does not prevent future mold growth. Mold must be removed, not just killed, to eliminate the health hazard. The EPA "Guide to Controlling Mold and Moisture in the Home" brochure that I recommended a few weeks ago, lays out the clean-up procedure well. First you clean the affected area and then you disinfect with a weak bleach solution. (1 cup bleach per gallon of water)

Many wall coverings are porous and will not only absorb water, but will wick the water above the water level. Sheetrock is very absorbent. Remove or cut the gypsum board so none of it will be in the water. Many paneling materials are also absorbent, so the same instructions should be followed.

Purchase a humidity gauge, and keep the humidity below 70 percent if possible. A dehumidifier will remove some of the water from the air. Ventilating with dry outdoor air also will reduce the humidity level. Providing both an opening for air to enter and exit is critical. Fans can help assist with moving dryer outside air through the basement.

The bottom line is that water will continue to enter the basement as long as the water table is high, so the goal is to control the water flow rather than eliminate it. Generally, the water cannot be stopped from entering the basement with products placed inside the basement because of external water pressure.

In case you missed the web address I shared last week for some excellent Extension resources related to flooding I will share it again. I have reviewed many of the links and they are very good. A specialist from Nebraska pulled materials from across the nation related to flooding at this address.
https://flood.unl.edu/

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