

Sewers can do minor machine repairs

You're ready to start on a new spring project, and suddenly you're confronted with a reluctant sewing machine.

Don't panic! Check a few common problem areas before seeking professional help. Approximately 70 percent of sewing machine repairs are minor adjustments you can handle yourself. Most problems fall within one of three areas: noise, stitch quality and movement and/or power noise.

A squeak usually results from lack of oil. Use sewing machine oil, not an all purpose oil. Because of its constant movement and high speed, the bobbin area requires more lubrication than other parts. Check your manual for specific oiling points on your machine.

Check for an obstruction which could be caused by thread, lint or a foreign object.

Thread can be trapped around the spool holder or tension mechanism, caught in a thread guide or wrapped around the hand-wheel mechanism. It can also become jammed in the bobbin area causing threads to wrap around each other.

Lint can build up slowly, eventually forming felt. Clean all visible fuzz. Look under the needle plate, around the feed dogs and in the bobbin area.

Foreign objects, such as pins or needle tips from accidental breakage, can also lodge in these areas. Do not sew over pins. The meeting of needle and pin will usually cause disaster!

Any obstruction lodged in a moving part will also cause a noisy machine. While trying to remove obstructions, don't compound the problem by jabbing around with metal seam ripper or scissors. Use air, brush or skewers to loosen debris and remove all plates and brackets for easy cleaning access.

An odd noise can also indicate a broken or cracked part. In this instance, take the machine to a repair shop. Ask to have defective parts returned to you; this assures you they were replaced. This is a law in some areas.

A variety of stitching problems can create puckered or loose stitches, skip, fail to form a stitch, make

wiggly and uneven stitches or not move the fabric at all.

Whenever the stitch is irregular, most home-sewers assume it's the tension and reach for that knob or, more often, throw up their hands in despair. The real explanation of the problem is usually much simpler.

Puckering is usually caused by the needle, thread or a combination of the two. Could be damaged in a spot you can't see. Insert a new needle; it's much cheaper than a repair call.

Poor quality thread can also cause seam puckering. If the thread is slubby, it will feed unevenly through the needle and cause stitching inconsistencies. If it's too elastic, it will stretch under tension and then pull after it's sewn, creating puckers. If the thread is too large for the eye of the needle, it cannot feed evenly through the machine.

To avoid thread-related problems, buy the best quality thread you can and choose the proper needle size.

Puckering can also be caused by a defective bobbin. It's imperative to use the bobbin size and shape designed for your machine. Because even a 1/16" variance can cause several problems. Look for cracks, rough spots or rust and dispose of any defective ones.

If your tension seems too loose, check the threading path, and make sure the thread is passing through the tension mechanism correctly.

Skipped stitches occur when the machine does not form a complete stitch with each up-and-down movement of the needle. This is usually caused by an improper needle choice or incorrect insertion.

Skipping occurs more frequently on knit fabrics than woven fabrics. A ball point needle should be used on knits to avoid skipped stitches. Needles designed especially for stretch fabrics are available from several companies.

Tightly woven fabrics, such as heavy waterproof nylon, canvas or denim, require a very sharp pointed needle to prevent skipped stitches. These are often referred to as jeans or denim needles.

Genuine leather or suede requires a wedge or chisel pointed needle

for even stitch formation. Imitation suedes, however, should be handled as knits.

Poorly formed, jagged stitches can be caused by insufficient pressure from the presser foot or a burr on the throat plate or presser foot.

Most machines have a mechanism for regulating the pressure the foot exerts on the fabric. Check your manual for a dial or screw-release mechanism. Experiment with various pressure settings until the fabric feeds evenly and straight.

A burr, or any rough spot can catch and snag fabric as it travels through the machine, causing the fabric to twist and jerk. Feel the throat plate, the bobbin area and especially the bottom of the presser

foot. If you find rough spots, smooth them by rubbing with a piece of crocus cloth (an extra-fine sandpaper available at hardware stores).

After you've checked the obvious reasons for poor stitch quality and haven't found a problem, adjust the tension knob. Tension is not nearly as difficult to adjust as most home-sewers believe. A general guide is if the knots of top thread show on the bottom side of the fabric the upper tension is too loose and vice-versa. Thread tension tightens when the knob is turned to the right (to a higher number) and loosens to the left (to a lower number). The bobbin case set screw follows the same principles, right for tight, left for loose.

Communication is essential to families

In today's fast-paced world it is more important than ever that families communicate well. Much has been written about how to say what you mean, but the rules are often lost in day-to-day interactions.

Adequate communication is essential in maintaining satisfying family relations. That's why it's important to continuously guard against lazy responses like a reply of "uh huh," a grunt, or silence—no reply at all.

It's a common observation that as marriage continues over the years many partners appear to talk less and less to one another. Some couples believe conversation isn't always necessary because a kind of "marital telepathy" develops after 10 or 15 years. A long dinner conversation might be: "Did you...?" asks the husband. "Yes," answers the wife.

"Marital telepathy" or "mind reading skills" do not develop during marriage. Spouses can understand each others' unspoken thoughts about as well as a parent can read a teenager's mind.

Studies have failed to prove that family members can understand one another or anticipate another's responses just because they live together. Understanding is communicated with real words and gestures.

There are many reasons for the apparent demise of meaningful communication. It may be desire. Not everyone has the same desire to talk. Security in talking freely about feelings and daydreams may be threatened by a parent or partner's ridicule or unfavorable reply. Rather than risking destruction of their self-esteem family members clam up, watch TV, work, or play somewhere else.

All writings on family communication emphasize talking things over and airing problems. Don't let grievances fester, the books on

family communications say. Some things are better left unsaid. Usually the first few moments of a conversation state the facts and from then on it becomes repetitious or drags in items outside the issue.

If people could only remember that one person can't change another's mind or actions. You are the only one who can change your mind or decide what actions you will take. You are not likely to change another person's mind through pressure or nagging or put-downs.

A person may give up and give in, but a reversal in thinking or behaving occurs only when, in silence, the arguments are thought about and a different decision is made. A constant review of dissatisfactions makes people expend all their brain power defending their own positions.

Good selectivity in knowing when to talk and when to shut-up helps you express yourself clearly at an appropriate time. Having done that, you can only wait and hope for the changes you desire in the other person.

appropriate time. Having done that, you can only wait and hope for the changes you desire in the other person.

A wife whines daily at the dinner table about no carpeting upstairs. Her husband makes jokes about having never worn a matched pair of socks since he married. Husbands and wives, or parents who continue to communicate dissatisfaction, will never bring about changes in their partner's or children's thinking or actions. They only damage relationships and feelings of self-worth.

The old adage "catch them doing something well" may help bring about change slowly, but it's a good approach and one that works out much more happily. Maybe you can limit conversation about grievances to a monthly discussion and not use disappointments and frustrations for continuous attacks on another's self-esteem.

Being overly solicitous of the sibling with a disability may be saying—"I really do love my brother" or "If I pay a lot of attention to my sister, maybe mom and dad will appreciate me more" or "it gets boring, but this what I'm supposed to do."

In general the pattern of adjustment is for the sibling to seem more involved on some days than others and to appear as if the parents can handle things and that there is no point in getting upset.

Resources used for this issue: Arent, Ruth P. Stress and your child. A parent's guide to symptoms, strategies and benefits. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1984.

Meyere, Donald J. and Patricia F. Vadasy. Living with a brother or sister with special needs: A book for sibs. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1985.

Chose repairmen carefully

Not everyone has the time and talent to take on home repairs. Those who fall into the not-enough-time category, may want to contract for work such as exterior painting, roofing, or other spring household repairs.

However, contracting for work and getting satisfactory results can be a trying experience, even with a reputable repairman.

Try to select a repairman or contractor whose work you know. Examine previous work done by the contractor and talk with homeowners who have employed the contractor and talk with homeowners who have employed the contractor. You also can consult an architect, businessman or the Better Business Bureau/Chamber of Commerce in your area for additional references.

Seek at least three bids before you choose a contractor. A written agreement that clearly states in detail what you expect and the amount of money agreed upon for payment should be included.

Although the agreement will vary slightly depending on the repair, it should include the exact location and extent of the repair and whether the repair involves new construction.

Materials to be used, including their colors and their cost should be specified. If paint is used, the number of coats to be applied should be noted.

In addition, the statement should say that work will conform to local

and state building codes.

A separate agreement between the contractor and owner should describe material, labor, equipment, completion date, payment schedule and who cleans up the mess after the job.

Make sure that the extent to which the repairman or contractor will assume responsibility for damage to your property, or that of your neighbors, is clear in writing. The agreement should also clarify that liens may not be placed against the job for failure of the contractor or repairman to pay for materials, labor or equipment.

The contract should state cash

price, including any down payment, the unpaid balance, the amount financed and the total number of payments. This lets you know the cost of the financing, above the cost of the work.

As work begins, check progress, but stay out of the workmen's way. Interference can cause delays, affect quality, or cause disagreements and added costs. If you have questions refer to your contract to see if the subject was covered.

Finally, when the job is completed, inspect the project with the repairman and make sure you are satisfied that the job has been done as originally agreed upon.

Beef tips for March

Maintain adequate nutrition for those cows calving last as well as those cows which are lactating.

Continue calf watch.

Order vaccination supplies and implants.

Prepare for the breeding season by having enough bulls available, by having bulls semen tested, and vaccinating for vibriosis at least 30 days prior to the start of the breeding season.

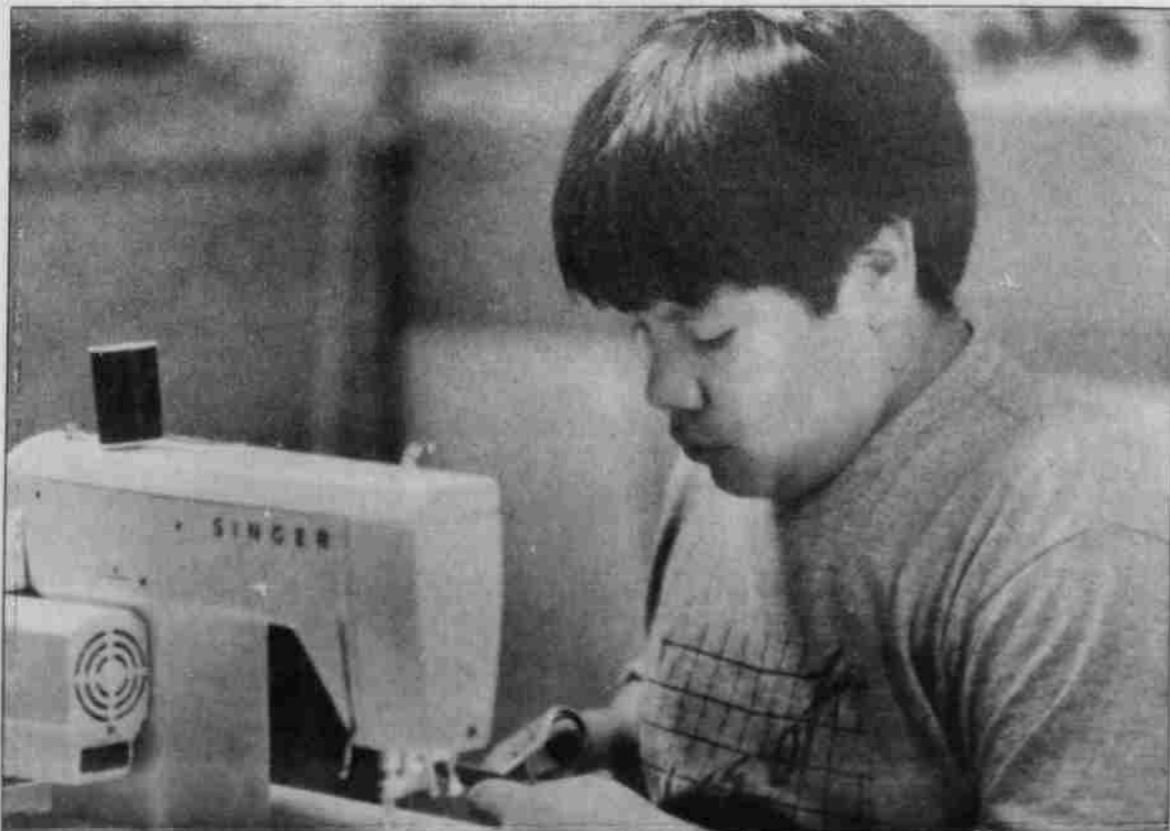
Consider parasite control measures for lice.

Continue to supply adequate amounts of mineral and vitamins including selenium.

Be prepared for magnesium deficiencies or "grass staggers" in the early spring when grass first begins to grow rapidly.

Quilting class set in March

There will be a "Quilt In A Day" workshop held Saturday, March 21 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Monday, March 23 from 6 to 9 p.m. Contact the Extension Office to sign up.



Ronnie Palmer constructs a Karate suite during 4-H Sewing Club meeting.



Culture and Heritage 4-H Club member Alfredine Smith learns crocheting technique.