



RUST-PROOFING

Most motorhome base vehicles come with a basic level of rust-proofing from the factory. So if you want the maximum life out of your motorhome you need to get it rust-proofed. Peter Rosenthal looks at the options...



Once the vehicle has been thoroughly cleaned and dried it will need to be elevated to gain access to all of the underside cavities. This is why you can only do a partial job on a DIY basis

If your motorhome hasn't been rust-proofed, it will probably already be starting to rust, even if it's only one year old. Most motorhome base vehicles are built to a specific brief: they're designed to last three years or 100,000 miles in the hands of white van man. Rust-proofing is not of primary interest to your typical fleet buyer.

When used as a base for a motorhome, the use of the van is very different. Most do only about 10,000 miles a year or less and the lifespan is much longer. Ten and 20-year-old motorhomes are not unusual.

While some motorhome converters do add extra rust-proofing to their vehicles, the majority do not. Few buyers get on their hands and knees and peer underneath the vehicles, with more glamorous and 'sellable' items being a priority (like flat screen TVs and fancy trim).

While the base vehicle treatments are getting better, they're still only applied to a price and even very new vehicles will have some surface rust on them. So all vehicles, irrespective of age will benefit from extra protection.

In the case of my own (2009, 11,000-mile) Ford Transit motorhome there was already some surface rust at the chassis seams and joints. At this stage it's a doddle to treat and

can be stopped in its tracks. Left unchecked this would cause an MoT failure at some future point – maybe ten years, maybe 15 years.

Serious bodywork rust is without question one of the most expensive items to fix on any vehicle, so if you plan to keep your vehicle any length of time, then investing in rust-proofing is a wise move.

WHAT CAUSES RUST?

Before you can treat rust, it's helpful to know what causes it. Rust is simply the oxidation of steel when exposed to water or air moisture.

Typically rust starts around areas exposed to stone chips. Even in the case of galvanised panels – which are effectively coated in a hard zinc layer – the coating can be chipped or worn away.

Once the protective coating of paint / galvanising has been penetrated, water and road debris can get in. One of the annoying properties about water is that it exhibits high levels of 'creep' under panels and paint. Untreated, the steel panels then start to corrode and the paint bubbles.

Another equally annoying and unique property to water is that it expands when frozen (unlike almost any other liquid on earth)

and can crack almost anything that restricts it. You may remember doing experiments at school where you fully fill a vessel with water and then freeze it. No matter how strong the vessel, it will always crack.

An additional problem for the UK is the use of road salt in winter. This causes additional electro-chemical reactions to take place and makes the oxidation more rapid. This is why it's very important to thoroughly wash off all the road salt



On this 2008 vehicle, there was already surface rust starting at the seams of this chassis section. Left untreated this would spread and could cause future problems

as soon as possible in winter conditions.

The key to all rust-proofing treatments is that they have to do two main tasks: coat the metal to prevent damp ingress and fend off stone chips, as well as creeping over existing surface rust and neutralising it.

DIY OR PROFESSIONAL?

The first decision is whether to apply rust-proofing treatment yourself or get a professional to do it. Obviously budget comes into it and there are many different brands of DIY kits with brands such as Waxoyl, Dinitrol and Sika, being some of the most popular.

Most use a solvent to carry the rust-proofing product and are typically about 70 per cent solvent. When sprayed on a surface, the solvent helps the flow of the product and then evaporates leaving the coating behind.

With DIY applications the trick is to squirt a fine layer of product into as many body cavities you can get to and then apply a thicker layer to areas more exposed to water spray (under the wheelarches, for example). If you can brush or spray an area directly, you can give it

reasonable protection. Where you will struggle on a DIY basis is to properly coat all cavities.

Even the most powerful DIY air compressor kits are not a patch on those used by professionals. Tins of rust-proofing products sold in the DIY stores can be bought with a hand-pressurised pump (the trick is to heat the can first before use to make the product flow better) but this can only spray so far. A long chassis rail section, or one of the box structures supporting the engine, will not be properly tackled with DIY kit.

It's also a very messy business doing it yourself and time consuming. Firstly you'll need to clean the dirt off your vehicle and this is surprisingly difficult to do as you can't get a jet wash lance easily under the vehicle – it really needs to be lifted in the air.

You then need to drive the whole vehicle onto a tarpaulin before you start spraying and the product can ooze out for weeks. As you will get covered in the stuff, overalls, masks and eye protection are essential bits of kit.

If you're on a really tight budget, though, having a go yourself is better than nothing.



This underseal was factory applied by Ford; note all the bits that have been missed. It would be a similar story if this were any other brand of base vehicle – they all have pretty rudimentary rust-proofing as standard

Given the limitations to DIY applications, you'd be wise to reapply the treatment on an annual basis, though. So over time it may not actually save as much as you think compared to a professional treatment.

RUSTMASTER

Tel: 01707-274819 ■ Web: www.rustmaster.co.uk

Questions answered by: Michael Miller, Operations Director

What products do you offer?

Rustmaster uses the products supplied by Waxoyl AG (www.waxoyl.com), using 120-4 Professional cavity wax for the internal structures and Hard Wax for exterior surfaces.

Where are your branches?

There are two branches in the UK catering for the north and south of the country. One is based in the north west in Knutsford, Cheshire, while the other is in Hatfield to the north of London.

How long does it take to apply?

There are two technicians working on the vehicle at their branches and a typical motorhome treatment takes up to six hours. It starts with the vehicle being thoroughly steam cleaned and prepared. After the steam

cleaning has taken place the vehicle is dried thoroughly. While the drying takes place, the internal surfaces – such as the box structures, sills, door cavities, subframe and chassis cross members are treated with Waxoyl Professional 120-4 applied with specialist spraying gear.

How long do you have to wait before using vehicle afterwards?

Michael stated that there is no need to wait after the treatment has been applied. The vehicle can be used immediately.

Advantages of your product?

Michael commented that this is a professional-use only product and contains no rubber compounds. This makes it very resistant to ageing and cracking. It won't dry out, get brittle or crack; in fact it never dries out.

Length of guarantee?

A five-year guarantee is offered with the treatment.

Any special conditions to keep guarantee?

It needs to have a free annual inspection at a Rustmaster branch. This involves cleaning and inspecting the application.

Is it transferable to a new owner?

Yes

Costs?

Cost depends on the size and start from £588 for a 19ft long model to £708 for a 30ft long vehicle (including VAT). RVs and larger vehicles are priced separately – ring for prices. MMM readers mentioning this feature will receive a £50 discount on these prices.

BEFORE 'N' AFTER

Tel: 01788-832255 ■ Web: www.before-n-after.co.uk

Questions answered by: Chris Parkinson, Owner

What products do you offer?

Before 'n' After offers Waxoyl made in Prudhoe in Northumberland. This product is then treated to the addition of a two percent special additive that is claimed to make the product more impact resistant. A clear product called KleenTect containing Teflon is also used to treat the vulnerable edges of the wheelarches.

Where are your branches?

The firm is based in Rugby and can cater for any size of vehicle even up to the size of a coach.

How long does it take to apply?

Before 'n' After recommends customers arrive at its premises for 9am and their vehicle will be ready to be collected at 5pm. A courtesy car is offered (free of charge, with a £750 excess) as is a 26-page information pack on the highlights of the surrounding area to explore. This details everything from canal walk to antique shops and golf clubs. The treatment involves thoroughly blasting any loose dirt and rust off the underside of

the vehicle and then letting it dry thoroughly (this takes about half an hour). A typical treatment will involve spraying around 30-litres of Waxoyl in the doors, sills, bonnet, cavities and internal structures. The underside is sprayed with black Waxoyl and the edge of the wheelarch lips are treated to KleenTect clear lacquer.

How long do you have to wait before using vehicle afterwards?

Waxoyl contains 70 percent white spirit and some other solvents that have to evaporate. Before 'n' After recommends that you shouldn't sleep in the vehicle for a couple of weeks after the application.

Advantages of your product?

Chris Parkinson, Before 'n' After owner, commented that he has been in business since 1987 and has developed his application technique extensively over this period, with some £80,000 having been invested in custom-made equipment and specialist spraying gear. He claims the rust-removal procedure is

particularly thorough thanks to high-powered equipment and the specialist drying equipment that can dry the whole vehicle – including the internal cavities – in 30 minutes. The method of application used is said to give a very thick and even coating to all internal cavities (they have a demonstration unit to showcase this – ask for a demo of it to get £10 off your treatment).

Length of guarantee?

Five years against seeing rust come through the treatment.

Any special conditions to keep guarantee?

No and it's not subject to annual inspections.

Is it transferable to a new owner?

Yes

Costs?

A small motorhome up to 20ft costs £660, rising to £780 for a large motorhome. Coach-sized vehicles cost from £1,140. All these prices include VAT.

GLADWINS

Tel: 01733-404545 ■ Web: www.gladwins.com

Questions answered by: Alistair Powell, Business Development Manager

What products do you offer?

Two products; Underbody Gold and Clear Gold. These brand names are unique to Gladwins and are supplied by Iatceurope, who also supplies rust-protection coatings and sound-proofing coatings as original equipment to firms such as Mercedes-Benz and Aston Martin.

Where are your branches?

Gladwins rust-proofing treatment takes place at the Warboys branch in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. Gladwins has seven branches across East Anglia for bodywork repair, it's worth noting.

How long does it take to apply?

If the vehicle is new (or has been cleaned and dried) the treatment will take one day to apply. A free courtesy car is available while the treatment is applied. If the vehicle needs cleaning and drying (in a paintshop oven) an



extra day will be needed. The Gold treatment involves applying Underbody Gold to the underside of the vehicle, internal chassis rails, wheelarches and exposed areas. 'Gold Plus' additionally involves treating internal chassis rails and all internal cavities and exposed metal parts in the engine bay with Clear Gold.

Also on offer is Clear Gold all over (for an additional cost) that dries completely clear – this is ideal for classic vehicles where a change of colour is not desirable.

How long do you have to wait before using vehicle afterwards?

The products used are eco-friendly and solvent free. They do not drip and give off next to no odour so can be used straight away.

Advantages of your product?

Underbody Gold and Underbody Clear Gold are eco-friendly products that use no waste oil or solvent in their manufacture. Underbody Gold is a 100 per cent solid content material that is dries to a firm dry gold/beige-coloured film that remains flexible. It has good penetration and not only protects against rust but also stops further oxidation of existing rust. Clear Gold is completely clear and has even greater penetrative power than Underbody Gold.

Both products have not previously been available to anyone but original equipment vehicle manufacturers and have been extensively tested in hostile environments (eg by submerging a coated digger in seawater!).

Underbody Gold and Clear Gold have both passed salt spray testing to DIN EN ISO 9227.

Length of guarantee?

Gladwins guarantee the product and application for five years.

Any special conditions to keep guarantee?

It is subject to a free of charge external check. This consists of a detailed vehicle inspection and will be carried out free of charge for the first five years. There is a £30 charge for any reapplication needed due to damage (provided there is no structural repair needed which can be quoted for this separately in the bodyshop).

Is it transferable to a new owner?

Yes

Costs?

The Gold treatment costs from £354 for a small motorhome to £528 for a large motorhome. The Gold Plus treatment is priced from £438 to £612. An entire treatment in Clear Gold (which is entirely clear) adds £120 to the above prices. Clear Gold is recommended for classic vehicles where it is preferable for the paint colour to remain visible. All prices include VAT. If your motorhome needs to be steam cleaned and dried prior to this, it adds £102 to the cost and will take an extra day. Larger motorhomes and RVs will be priced on an individual basis. If more than one vehicle is booked into having a treatment, there is a 10 per cent discount.

RUSTBUSTERS

Tel: 01202-524545 ■ Web: www.rustbusters.co.uk

Questions answered by: Phil Lewis, Owner

What products do you offer?

Rustbusters applies three different types of Waxoyl, using clear Waxoyl for internal cavities, black Waxoyl for external panels and Waxoyl underseal to seal everything place.

Where are your branches?

The treatments are done in the workshops in Poole, Dorset. A mobile service isn't offered as owner Phil Lewis reckons that it can only be done properly in a workshop.

How long does it take to apply?

Two days. The first stage of the treatment is to lift the vehicle up on a special lift and remove the wheels (to get access to the wheel arches). Next, any dirt, loose underseal and surface rust is blasted off using very high pressure compressed air. Any rust is removed using an electric wire brush and a scabblor. Once any rust is sorted, certain components (eg brakes) are masked off and clear Waxoyl is injected into all internal cavities, while external

panels are coated in black Waxoyl. To finish the treatment off, the whole underside is sealed with black Waxoyl underseal, including the underside of the plywood floor (which can delaminate if it isn't protected).

How long do you have to wait before using vehicle afterwards?

As the underseal coats the Waxoyl and reduces fumes it can be used straight away. As air dries it, it is helpful if it's driven.

Advantages of your product?

Waxoyl is a tried and tested product and Phil has been using it for over 30 years, using it for over 20 years with his own business. Expensive Swedish spray equipment is used by Rustbusters to ensure a good coverage. Waxoyl works well at sealing the plywood underside found on many coachbuilts and is also effective at coating galvanised metal (eg on an Al-Ko chassis). Not all treatments will stick to galvanised metal. On Phil's own

motorhome, the coating is claimed to have lasted over 18 years.

Length of guarantee?

If there are any problems, simply bring it back and Rustbusters will sort it out. There is no set warranty period, but Phil comments that there are rarely any issues.

Any special conditions to keep guarantee?

No, but it's recommended to get the underside checked at MoT time. Again if there are any issues, return the vehicle to Rustbusters to get it sorted.

Is it transferable to a new owner?

Yes

Costs?

Small motorhomes cost £600 to be treated, while the largest motorhomes Rustbusters can do (24ft) are priced at £800. All prices include VAT.

Desert Detours

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