

# Bowral Bricks

## Bowral Charolais Cream laying and cleaning recommendations

This product is very sensitive to vanadium staining, which is not permanent and will appear after exposure to hydrochloric acid or excessive water penetration (refer to pages 16 & 17 of the Think Brick Australia “Cleaning of Clay Masonry” manual [www.thinkbrick.com.au](http://www.thinkbrick.com.au)). Vanadium salts are naturally occurring in many light coloured bricks and the resulting stains can be best managed as follows:

### LAYING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Do not soak bricks prior to laying. The brick pack can be lightly sprayed and allowed to dry initially to reduce the suction of the brick but saturating the brick will lead to problems.
2. Adjust the mortar consistency to match the brick. The mortar for dry pressed bricks needs to be softer than for extruded bricks as the brick will absorb moisture from the mortar quite quickly and reduce the time available for adjustment.
3. Do not make the mix harder than necessary. If M3 mortar is required don't make M4 mortar - it will only be more difficult to clean off later.
4. Do not use clayey sand in the mortar. This will be extremely difficult to clean off.
5. Properly fill the prep joints. It makes a stronger wall and reduces excessive water penetration.
6. Cover the top of the wall when rain is expected and until eaves/roofing or coping is installed to prevent excessive water penetration.
7. Clean the job as you go to avoid the need for using hydrochloric acid later. Take more care than normal to ensure no

smears or dags of mortar are left to dry on the brickwork. If the use of hydrochloric acid is required\* to clean mortar from dirty brickwork a lot more work will then be required to remove the resulting vanadium stains.

### CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS\*\*

8. Yellow/green stains present on the bricks prior to laying can be treated successfully with sodium hypochlorite which is the active ingredient in household bleach and swimming pool chlorine (a trigger pack of exit mould is a convenient option). Once the stain has disappeared rinse the brick with clean water.
  9. Any stains remaining after step 8 may require a stronger treatment. Use either
    - a. A mix of 20 to 40 grams of oxalic acid per litre of water (preferably hot) applied to dry bricks, followed by a neutralising solution of 15 grams per litre of Sodium Bicarbonate once the stain has disappeared. The neutralising solution should not be rinsed off.
- OR
- b. Mix 150 grams of potassium or sodium hydroxide (caustic soda) per litre of water and apply to the stained bricks. Wash off with clean water once the

stain has disappeared. 10. Some mild stains may reappear after more water (rain) on the masonry depending on the amount of salts originally in the brick and the amount already treated. Address these stains using step 8. Similar to typical white efflorescence, these stains will reduce and disappear in time.

\* If hydrochloric acid is to be used, all existing vanadium stains must first be removed using steps 8 and/or 9. If this is not done the hydrochloric can cause mild yellow/green stains to become darker brown or black which will be much more difficult to remove. The wall should be pre-wet with clean water to minimize acid absorption into the body of the brick and the weakest possible solution of acid should be used. Once the bricks are surface dry, follow up with the neutralising solution as per 9(a) above. Any resulting vanadium stains then need to be treated using step 9.

\*\*Test the chemicals removal efficiency and your application technique on a small discrete test area to determine the most suitable treatment to use, prior to use on the entire affected area.

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