

Check the R-value

Insulation the key to keeping warm

Insulation in your home helps keep warm air in and cold air out during the winter. During the summer the opposite is true. The myriad of different types of insulation available to you may be confusing, but knowing what your specific situation requires will help you sort it all out.

Insulation is rated on scale called "R-value." The higher the number on the R-value, the better the insulation. The R-value has to do with the thickness of the insulation. Keep this in mind while shopping.

Insulation comes in several mediums. There are pellets, sheets and batts. Each medium serves a different purpose. Pellets, or loose filler, are used for spaces between floor joists. Some people have also used them to fill in between wall studs, but that is not a very good idea. In most cases, the pellets have settled over time, leaving the upper part of the walls unprotected. Sheets, or large blanket pieces of insulation, are used for covering exposed frames of walls, ceilings, floors or heating ducts. They are long and wide, and may not require cutting—a true time-saver. Batts are smaller pieces of insulation for smaller, vertical areas. Both sheets and batts are good for wrapping around pipes or placing in wall or ceiling areas.

Unless you are going to attach a vapor barrier that you have made yourself from heavy cardboard or are just adding more insulation to that which already has a vapor barrier,

always choose faced insulation. Faced insulation should be installed with the facing toward the warm side of the building. Foil-faced insulation is wonderful for those rooms that tend to experience the greatest amount of moisture, such as bathrooms, laundry areas or northern walls.

You should use insulation that is no thicker than the width of the framing pieces. Check with your local utility company to find the recommended R-value. When installing insulation in walls, push it in gently and then staple the facing flanges against the studs. You may also staple the flanges so that they overlap the outer edges of the studs. This will make for an even more effective insulator. When adding insulation to floors or ceilings, just place it on the floor between the studs. There should be no need to staple—just let gravity do the work for you.

When installing insulation, safety is an extremely important issue. You should wear long-sleeved shirts, pants, gloves and a mask. You may also want to use a fan while installing insulation. When you have finished with the installation, you should take a shower as soon as possible. You should use soap and hot water. This will keep the insulation from entering your body through your skin.

If you install it properly, insulation will go a long way toward reducing those pesky utility bills all year round.

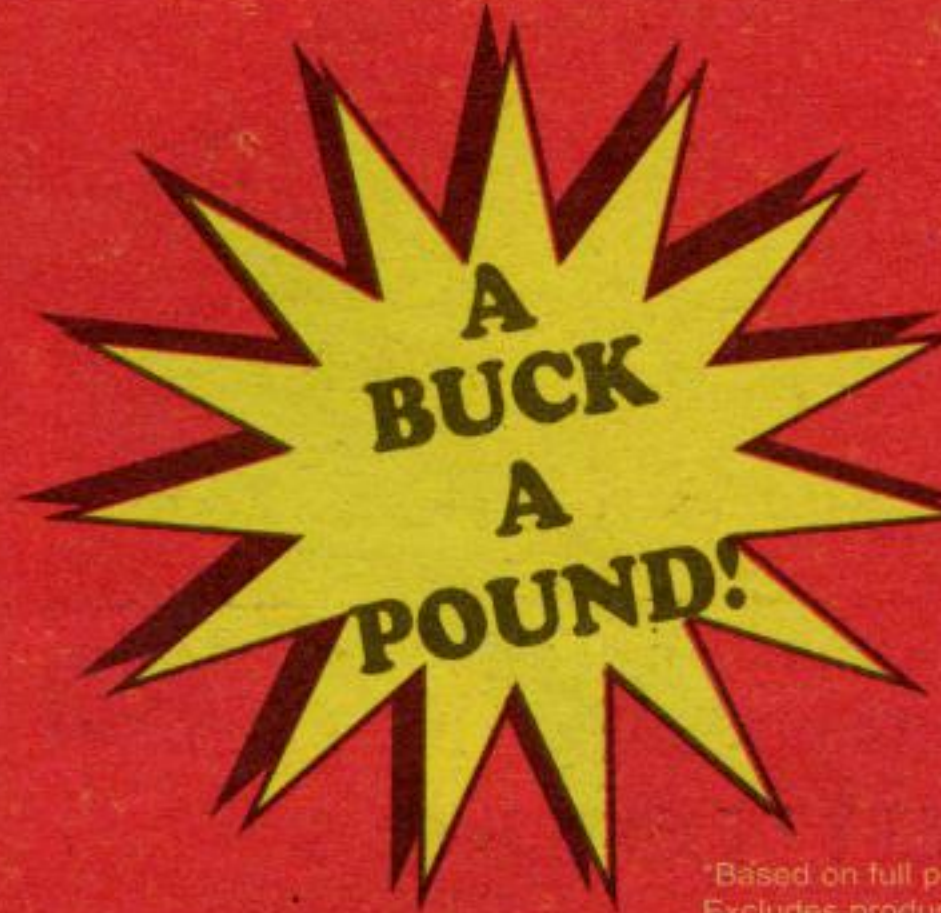
—By Kathy Scott, special



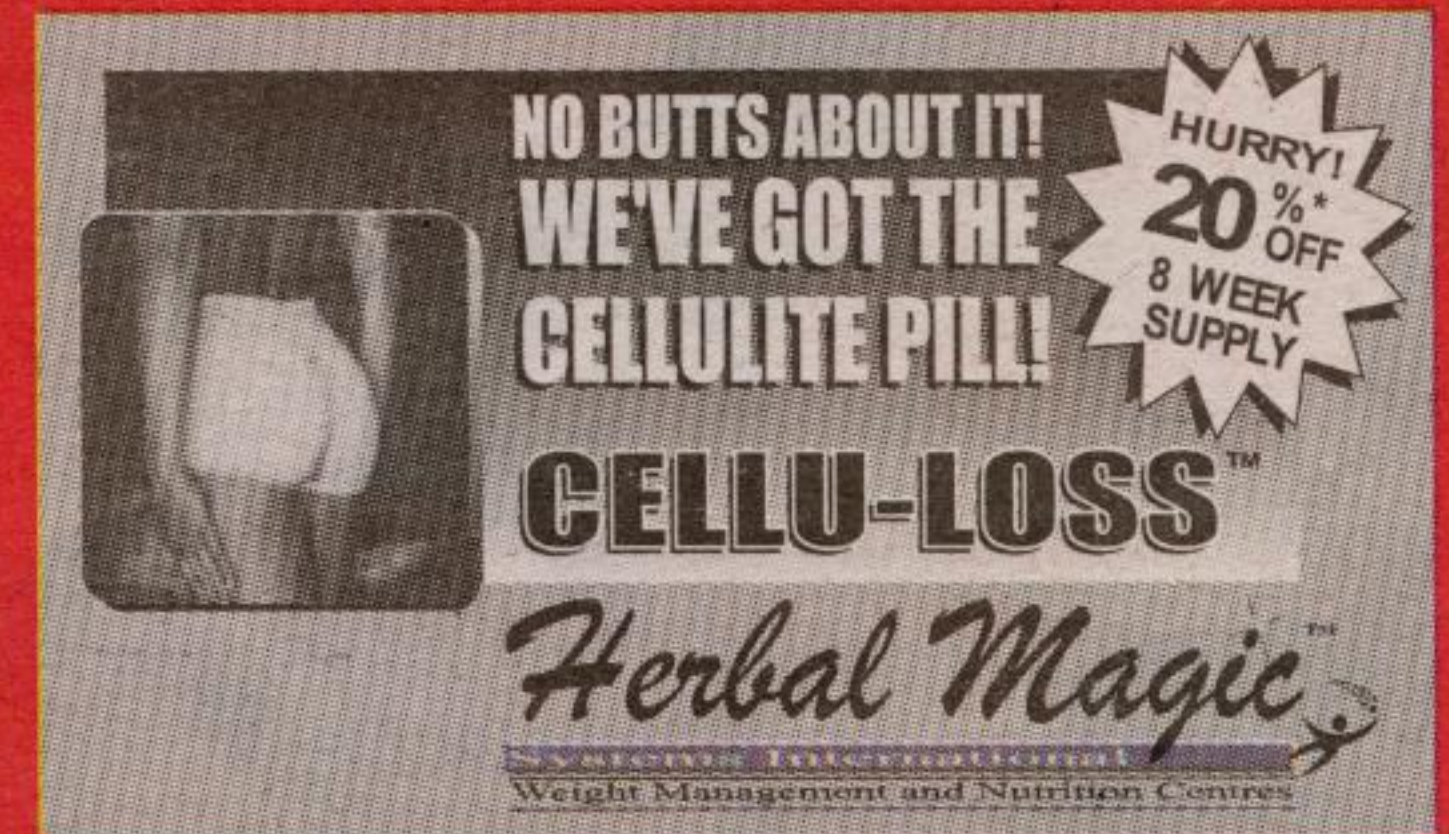
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