

published by
Consumers'
Association

March 1965

Which?

MOORE

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WOODWORM **FIBRES & FABRICS 3: FABRICS**
MEDICINES - PROPRIETARY OR STANDARD?
VENT-A-MATIC **INSTANT TV**

Vent-A-Matic

An Advertisement

'The new automatic air-ventilator. It runs on air. No motor. Non-electric.'

A number of members have been puzzled by the advertising for the VENT-A-MATIC and have written to ask us how it works.

The VENT-A-MATIC is a small ventilator which has a clear plastic propeller rotating in a clear plastic frame which can be fitted in a window pane. It comes in two sizes - the 5 in. unit costs £1 0s 9d with shutter and 15s 5d without; the 6½ in. unit £1 9s 3d with shutter and £1 0s 9d without.

The VENT-A-MATIC provides a small opening in the window, so you get a little extra ventilation without having to open the window. By varying the shutter opening you can vary the amount of ventilation to a limited degree. The propeller served little purpose - it turned only when air was already flowing through the opening. In still air it did not turn at all. It could not extract air in conditions where air would not normally flow out if you opened a window anyway. The VENT-A-MATIC lets air *in* if there is a wind blowing against the window. We tried it with the Storm-Guard (8s 6d extra for 6 in size, 6s 8d for 5 in). With a wind blowing directly *against* it, air still came in, but with a wind blowing *across* the window, a little air went out.

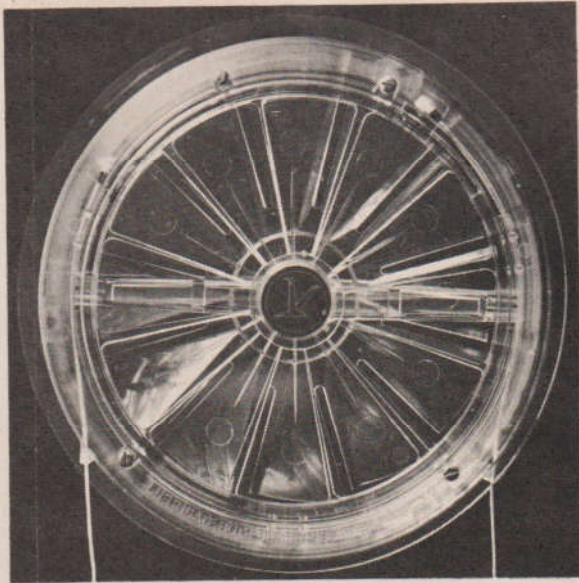
So the VENT-A-MATIC is useful in a limited way - it can give ventilation in situations where you don't want to open a window. But the advertising suggests far more than this.

'It runs on air. No motor. Non-electric.' 'Actuated solely by air and consuming no costly electric current, the VENT-A-MATIC actively helps to keep rooms free from stale air, cooking smells and condensation.'

The impression all this gives is that the VENT-A-MATIC works like an electric extractor fan but with no running costs. The advertising goes on to say the VENT-A-MATIC 'should not be confused with an electrical unit' but does not say why.

The VENT-A-MATIC *cannot* extract enough air on its own account to rid a room of stale air, steam, cooking smells, etc, any more than would opening the window by the equivalent amount. An electric extractor fan *can*. In fact, the VENT-A-MATIC lets very much less air through than a hole of the same size in the window.

If air is moving through the house towards the window, then air will go out through the VENT-A-



MATIC (as through an open window). To get adequate ventilation for a living room with four people in it, the air pressure against the VENT-A-MATIC should be about equivalent to a 15 mph wind - a moderate breeze. So it may give adequate ventilation by air coming in, but it is unlikely to do so by air going out.

To get rid of cooking smells from a kitchen you need far more ventilation than this, and the VENT-A-MATIC is likely - as an open window would be - to blow cooking smells out of the kitchen and through the house.

Although it cannot prevent condensation, it does help condensation to clear more quickly. Again, opening a window would have the same effect.

'Absolute silence of operation - a unique feature of the VENT-A-MATIC...'. This is the claim. But the instructions you get when you buy it tell you what to do 'should at any time movement of the rotor develop noise'. And it sometimes does.

'No risk of draughts... in the childrens' bedroom or nursery...'. If a cold wind blows against the VENT-A-MATIC, some cold air will come in. If this is not a draught, we don't know what is.

Conclusions

The VENT-A-MATIC is not expensive, and can be used to give a little extra ventilation without having the window open. But this extra ventilation would not be enough to get rid of cooking smells quickly, although it should help to clear condensation. The VENT-A-MATIC sometimes becomes noisy and may need oiling and cleaning. Just as a toy windmill would not be any good as a desk fan, the propeller on the VENT-A-MATIC cannot make it any more efficient as a ventilator.

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