



## FIELD CARE 2011

### RAW TROPHY CARE AND PREPARATION INFORMATION

***The better your trophies are handled and prepared is directly proportional to the resulting quality of your finished trophy.***

#### **General hints after the shot**

All the following procedures are to prevent decomposition and hair loss of your hide or trophy.

- Rinse any bullet wounds with cool water ASAP
- Never drag an animal carcass, this will cause bruising and cause hair loss. Always place a sail/tarpaulin underneath the animal and then carefully lift or gently drag the animal on the tarpaulin to shade or to your vehicle. Ensure that the load box of the vehicle is cool and free from grease and dirt. Take your trophy out of direct sunlight as soon as possible. Carefully move your trophy undercover or cover with branches and then skin and gut as soon as possible.
- Gut the animal immediately to:
  - Reduce the weight of the animal by up to 1/3
  - Cool and reduce the temperature of the animal to reduce hair loss.
- Remove the carcass from the vehicle at the skinning shed and where possible hang immediately. Tag your skin and horns now with your name, hunted species, type of trophy (eg full mount) and date. Skin the animal removing all meat and excess fatty tissue. Skin as soon as possible to prevent hair slip. Wash the skin in cool water and allow to drain on wooden beam for 30 mins prior to salting. Skinning methods will be dictated by the trophy you require.

#### **Horns & Skulls**

Never cut a skull. ENSURE THAT YOUR HORNS AND SKULL ARE TAGGED AND MARKED.

Remove as much meat as possible, rinse. Using a stick or a long spoon stir the brain cavity and flush out as much brain tissue as possible. Wire and tie bottom jaws to skull where required (eg pigs, carnivores) preserving teeth and tusks. Salt thoroughly and store in a cool dry place.

#### **Salting the Skin**

- After washing and drip-drying, recheck the skin and again remove any flesh or fatty tissue still adhering to the skin. Do not allow dry patches to develop as this prevents penetration of salt into the skin. Never use metal drying beams or rust stains develop.



# MAGNUM TAXIDERMY

- Cover the salting board or ground with 2cm thick good quality coarse salt. Skins should be laid hair side down upon the salt and open the skin fully. Ensure the edges are open. Rub salt properly into the skin, making sure that there are no wrinkles left unsalted. Ensure all edges and folds are well salted including eyes, lips and ears. Pack the ears full of salt. Do not allow unsalted raw edges to touch. The whole skin should now be covered with a 1 to 2 cm layer of salt.
- At this point the skin can be rolled up or left flat for the next skin to be placed on top. To treat multiple skins, repeat the whole process, stacking the skins one upon the other. There should always be at least 1 cm of salt between stacked skins. Never use salt more than twice.
- After 36 to 48 hrs shake off old used salt and re-salt with clean fresh salt for a further 24 hours. The second salting need not be as thick but use new salt where available. After second salting, the skins can be placed into sun to dry.
- If on an extended hunt, as the skins dry, make folds in the skin that will protect the hair, ears, tail etc. Unfold daily and continue to dry out the skin. When almost dry, fold and ensure that identity tag is still visible. Sprinkle liberally with insecticide powder and store in a cool dry place and transport to your taxidermist for further processing.

## **Special Care of Thick Skins**

- Because Salt does not penetrate effectively more than +/- 5mm of skin, special care must be taken with thick skins (elephant, rhino, hippo, giraffe) to ensure that the hair roots get enough salt to preserve them.
- The easiest method is to lay the skin out on a flat surface, hair side down, and make longitudinal cuts with a sharp knife about 10mm apart and to a depth of 2/3 of the skin. Make sure not to cut through the skin. In some species of antelope, such as eland bulls, there is a very thick area of skin over the top of the neck, which requires this treatment. Giraffe, hippo, elephant and rhino skins require this treatment over virtually their total area to ensure salt penetration.
- With zebra, layers of fat under the mane must always be removed. This 40mm wide layer of fat under the mane is not easily seen on freshly skinned animals, is always present and can be felt as a thicker section of skin under the mane. Once this strip becomes visible it is too late to take any further action and the mane may fall out during the tanning process. Carefully cut out the fatty layer and rub salt in well.
- Ideally, animals with manes and thick-skinned animals should be placed in a salt brine (dissolve 20kg coarse salt in 100litres of water, prior to adding skins). Place skins in brine for 12 hours, then hang over a wooden pole to drain for 30 mins and removed to salt pit for salting process.



**If time does not permit all these steps before transporting trophies to the Taxidermist you should:** Skin, rinse and remove excess tissue as above.

Seal in a plastic bag and freeze solid **OR** salt liberally as above, roll up, place skins on a bed of salt and transport salted skins ensuring they remain cool and out of direct sunlight. Do not allow the trophy to lie in water or blood for any extended period. Do **NOT** place in a sealed plastic bag, unless kept frozen, or the skin will 'sweat'.

If you are unable to skin out the head of your trophy you should do one of the following;

Rinse, immerse in salt, keep cool, out of direct sunlight and transport to your taxidermist within 48 hours. Never store or transport in sealed plastic wrapping. Continually drain off excess blood/water

**OR**

Ensure you trophy remains cool; rinse and either refrigerate or freeze. Salted trophies and skins should **NOT** be frozen. Freezing a salted trophy inhibits proper freezing.

### **Birds and small mammals or reptiles**

**Do not skin** or gut any birds, small mammals or reptiles for full mounts wherever possible. Wash off excess blood with cold water. Pack wounds, mouth & anus with tissue. Wrap animal in tissue. Seal in plastic bag and **freeze ASAP**.

### **Caping Skins For Shoulder Mounts**

- Please refer to 'Raw Trophy Preparation Guidelines' before you start skinning. Ensure that animal was not dragged and that it is in a cool environment (ie. not lying in the hot sun, on a hot concrete floor or the back of the hot bakkie). At this point you should hang the carcass if at all possible. This makes skinning much easier.
- Using a sharp skinning knife, make the first cut and, wherever possible, insert the blade under the skin and cut upwards and outwards. This is to minimise cutting off the hairs on the skin that will be necessary to cover up the stitching when the trophy is mounted. Start your first incision behind the front legs, cutting all the way round the circumference of the torso. For Pedestal mounts this cut needs to be further towards the hind legs.
- Then, cut up the back of the neck from the first incision all the way to where the top of the neck joins the head. It is important to remember to cut alongside the mane-hairs and not through the mane. This cut should be approximately 1cm next to the mane. Then cut the skin around the circumference of the top of both front legs. The best place to do this is just below the 'elbow' of each leg.



- Once you have made these cuts, carefully proceed to separate the skin from the meat. Start at the top of the shoulders. Free the skin, as much as possible, either side of and up the length of the neck toward the head. Then skin around the front legs. Cut through the bone joint of the knee and slide the skin off the legs. Continue skinning all the way up the neck all the way to the base of the skull and jaw. Cut through the meat of the neck and separate the neck from the head by carefully cutting through the 'Atlas/Axis' joint. Be careful not to cut through the neck skin or drop the head onto the floor.
- Your carcass can now happily 'bleed' clean. The next step is to quickly rinse most of the blood off both the inside and outside of the skin. Use only cold water for this. Drain the skin for about 5 minutes. This step is very important. The rinsing cools down the skin and minimises the amount of bacterium on the skin.
- If a qualified skinner is available, then this is the time to skin out the head. This is an intricate process and not easily explained without actually demonstrating and practising the techniques necessary. We will gladly teach anyone that is willing.
- If, however, a qualified skinner is not available then it is best get the trophy to us ASAP. Leave skinning the head to the professionals. Remember to salt the cape liberally with clean salt. Do not put trophy in a plastic bag to prevent 'sweating', unless frozen, and keep the trophy cool and out of sun light, especially during transportation.

For specific advice on the correct skinning methods for Flat Skin Tans, Rug Mounts, Half Mounts or Full Mounts, contact Richard on 082 431 9569.