
The Elks Would Like to Tan Your Hide

Local hunters have the opportunity to stretch out a helping hand to veterans in need.

Colorado Elks Lodges are collecting deer, elk and other animal hides which will be tanned and distributed for recreational and occupational therapy throughout the Veterans Administration health-care system. Some of the tanned leather is also cut and sewn into specially designed fingerless gloves, which are furnished to Veterans confined to wheelchairs to protect their hands during movement.

The drive is part of a nationwide leather program that the Elks have been operating since 1948. The motto of the Elks National Veterans Service Commission is:

"So Long As There Are Veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Will Never Forget Them".

Once donated, volunteers clean, salt, fold and stack the hides. They are then transported to tanneries for processing. After cleaning and tanning, the leather is made available in craft kits to veterans to make wallets, clothing, belts and moccasins for personal use or to enter in arts and crafts shows. The program is totally funded by the Elks at no cost to veterans or the government. In fact, "Elks Leather" has become a national by-word among veteran patients everywhere.

Our veterans responded willingly to our call, and now it is only fitting that we respond to their needs.

How to Package the Salted Hide

After the hide has been salted and folded flesh-to-flesh and hair-to-hair, there are a couple of ways that the hides can be packed for donation:

- ✓ If only one or a few hides are being prepared for donation, stacking them in plastic or cardboard boxes is acceptable.
- ✓ If a large number of hides are being donated, evenly stacking them on pallets is preferred because it helps facilitate quick loading of transporting equipment with the least amount of manpower. This also results in lower transportation costs.

Major Elks Projects and Programs

- ❖ Colorado Elks Major Project: Laradon Hall
- ❖ Elks National Foundation
- ❖ Drug Awareness
- ❖ Soccer Shootout
- ❖ The Army of Hope
- ❖ Catch-a-Calf and Heifer Wrangle
- ❖ Annual Scholarships for High School Seniors
- ❖ Hoop Shoot Program
- ❖ Americanism Essay Contest
- ❖ Elks National Veterans Service Commission
- ❖ Elks National Home

For more information

Visit the Elks website at:

<http://www.elks.org>

Visit the Elks Veterans Leather website at:

<http://www.elks.org/vets/leather.cfm>



VETERANS LEATHER PROGRAM



How to Prepare and Donate Hides to the Elks Veterans Leather Program

How to Donate Your Hide

For information on how to properly prepare, care for and donate a hide or to participate in this program, please contact:

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How to "Salt" the Hide

1. Before salting you should remove and discard the excess pieces of fat and meat.
NOTE: Be very careful when preparing the hide. Avoid cutting even the smallest holes with the knife. All holes, bullets, arrows or careless trimming will become larger when the hides are processed at the tannery. Most tannery equipment stretches the hides and thereby increases the hole sizes. These holes can often change a quality hide into a barely useable one. A quality piece of leather will have very few holes, blemishes or scratches and can be used by the veterans for almost any type of project.
2. Lay the hide flat with flesh side up (at a slight angle to allow for draining).
3. Apply a heavy layer of salt to the flesh side. (Use table salt or livestock salt - **NO ROCK SALT.**)
4. Rub the salt into all of the fleshy surface, making sure that it reaches into all tight areas. The juices of the hide will mix with the salt and create a brine that will prevent bacteria growth. A small animal will require four to five pounds of salt and a larger animal might require as much as twelve pounds of salt. **YOU CANNOT USE TOO MUCH SALT!**
5. The hide should be placed on an inclined surface, and left open and unfolded for one to two days.
6. After one to two days, fold the hide flesh-to-flesh, and hair-to-hair.
7. Cleaning up around the salting area is fairly easy. Wearing rubber gloves and old clothing will keep this process safer and more sanitary.

What Happens to Your Donated Hide

Volunteers clean, salt (if not already salted), fold and stack the hides. They are then transported to tanneries for processing. After tanning the tanned leather is sewn into specially designed fingerless wheelchair gloves. which are furnished to Veterans confined to wheelchairs thru the VA Hospital system.

Preparation of the Hide

Before being sent to the Tannery for processing, each hide must be properly prepared to ensure it arrives fresh and bacteria-free. All donated hides must be "salted". This is very important because it leaches out unwanted liquids, sets the hair tight, and kills most bacteria that is on the hide. Proper preparation of the hide is key to the eventual tanning process.

Salting is the very first thing you should do after the animal has been skinned. As long as the skin is in it's raw state, unsalted, it is collecting bacteria. Areas not salted will allow bacteria to develop and spread throughout the hide.

Before being salted, the hide should be examined carefully to determine if it is still good. Spoiled hides can be identified by a peculiar odor, discoloration and if the hair begins to pull away from the hide easily. Spoiled hides cannot be processed and must be discarded.

Materials Needed

- ✓ Table salt, Canning salt, or Livestock salt. **IMPORTANT** - Do not use Rock Salt. Use enough to completely cover the entire hide. Plan on 5 to 8 pounds for deer hide and 10 to 15 pounds for elk hide.
 - ✓ Sharp Knife - For removing excess fat and flesh/meat.
 - ✓ Work surface - Can be any clean surface. Two saw-horses used to hold up a plywood surface usually works quite well.
 - ✓ Kitty Litter, sawdust, "Stay Dry", rags, or some other kind of absorbent material - To absorb excess dripping.
 - ✓ Rubber Gloves - Used when rubbing salt on the fleshy side of the hide and for clean-up.
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