



# Veterans Leather Program Instructions

First, spread the word! Donated hides come from a variety of locations and individuals such as hunters, farmers, ranchers, slaughter houses, locker plants, taxidermists and highway departments. It never hurts to ask! This program wouldn't exist without donations.

Proper preparation of hides prior to shipment to the designated tannery is extremely important. Rotted hides arriving at the tannery are discarded, making freight charges wasteful expenses.

The equipment and material required to prepare hides for storage and shipment are relatively inexpensive and may be obtained from local businesses as donations, or purchased for a nominal amount. You will need:

- A container of fine table salt or livestock salt (rock salt will not work)
- a sharp knife for removing excess fat, flesh, tails and tags
- A clean surface (the ground, a table, barrels, plywood, etc.)
- "Kitty litter" or sawdust under the loaded pallets, to absorb juices and odor
- Surgical rubber gloves or old gloves for clean up
- Packing materials (plastic or cardboard barrels for small amounts, pallets for large amounts)

## **Upon receiving hides:**

- 1) Carefully examine the hide 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. This means the hide is worthless and should be discarded. Processing hides that have been allowed to dry out is not cost-effective.
- 2) Good hides need to be immediately thawed, spread, cleaned and salted. Remove and discard excess fat, flesh and the tail. Be very careful when processing hides. Avoid cutting even the smallest holes with a knife. All holes, bullets, arrows or careless trimming will increase several times when the hides are processed at the tannery.





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- 3) Salt should be applied over all of the fleshy surface. A small animal will require four to five pounds of salt. A larger animal, such as a cow or an elk, might require as much as twelve pounds of salt. Remember, you cannot use too much salt!
- 4) Rub the salt thoroughly into all fleshy areas of the hide. Areas not salted will allow bacteria to develop and spread throughout the hide. The juices of the hide will mix with the salt and create a brine that will prevent bacteria growth.
- 5) When salting is completed, the edges of the hide should be folded in four to six inches to keep the moisture inside. This will keep the hides soft and pliable until they reach the tannery.

### **Packing hides:**

- 6) In colder climates, the hides, with the edges folded, can just be placed on the pallet, hair side down, one on top of the other.
- 7) In warmer climates, hides tend to spoil more rapidly. It is strongly recommended hides be again folded side to side and then placed on the pallet. This will help keep them in good condition until they reach the tannery.
- 8) Square up the pallet to facilitate the loading of the hides onto the commercial trucks with fork-lifts. Do not overload the pallets.
- 9) Shrink wrap the hides. Most commercial truck lines require this.
- 10) Store in a secure area, such as a CONEX container, discarded semi-truck trailer, shed, barn or fenced area, if inside storage is not available.
- 11) Transport hides to a designated State collection point, and notify the Veterans Leather Program Chair or Vice-Chair, who will arrange for efficient transportation to the tannery. Hides should not be individually sent to the tanneries, nor mailed "C.O.D" or by parcel post.

The Elks National Veterans Service Commission will pay the expenses for the transporting of salted hides from pre-designated State collection points to the tanneries. It will also cover the expense of tanning these hides.

