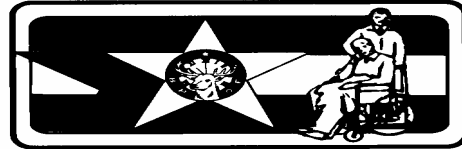


Elks National
Veterans
Service Commission



"Serving Our Nation's Veterans"

VETERANS LEATHER PROGRAM

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

FOR

COLLECTING, SALTING, PALLETIZING AND SHIPPING

HIDES

INTRODUCTION

The Elks National Veterans Service Commission is the major source of hides and tanned leather used for recreational and occupational therapy throughout the Veterans Administration health care system. Elks Leather has become a national by-word among veteran patients everywhere.

Time between visits from friends and families can make hospitalization a drudgery for our veterans. Leather provides a form of relief by keeping minds active as well as providing exercise for injured and unused muscles. Veterans often enter wallets, clothing, belts and moccasins in Arts and Crafts shows sponsored by the Elks.

Recently, a program was initiated by Elks whereby tanned leather is cut and sewn into specially designed gloves which are furnished to veterans confined to wheelchairs, thereby protecting their hands during movement.

BACKGROUND

The Elks Leather Program was initiated in 1948 when the Elks of California launched a hide-gathering program in their State during hunting season. The raw hides were collected at central points, salted and shipped to a Los Angeles tannery for processing. Finished leather, in brilliant colors, was made available to Veterans Medical facilities throughout the State.

To make this popular program available to all VA Medical Centers (VAMC), the Elks National Veterans Service Commission arranged funding to pay for tanning and shipping of the hides nationwide. Today, over nineteen States donate or are developing plans to support this program. All States are invited to donate hides, make use of the "Gloves for Wheelchair Veterans" program and participate in the tanned leather distribution.

Since the government does not budget money for leather for wheelchair gloves for veterans, it falls upon the Elks to keep the supply line open.

The Elks National Veterans Service Commission has pledged that: "While there is a committee of Elks on the job, therapists will never experience a shortage of leather".

PURPOSE

In order to continue *Serving Our Nation's Veterans*, the donation of animal hides (which are abundant and often disposed of in many States) is an important part of the National Veterans Service Commission Leather Program.

Proper preparation of hides prior to shipment to the designated tannery is extremely important. Spoiled hides which are shipped to tanneries, must be discarded. This inflates the freight charges and causes unnecessary wasteful expenses.

PROCEDURE

This pamphlet explains in detail proper procedures for processing and preparing salted hides for shipment to the tanneries. Methods to obtain tanned leather and wheelchair gloves for patients are also explained.

PREPARING THE HIDES FOR SHIPMENT

Donated hides come from a variety of locations and individuals such as hunters, farmers, ranchers, slaughter houses, locker plants, taxidermists and highway departments to name just a few. The hides usually can be obtained for our Veteran Leather Program simply by asking, since many of these places will only dispose of them.

Hides arrive at individual Lodges in various conditions including salted, unsalted, frozen, dry, dirty and in a variety of containers such as boxes or plastic bags. Sometimes they are simply rolled and tied. If hides have already begun to spoil, they can not be used. Good hides need to be immediately thawed, spread, cleaned and salted in the following manner:

The equipment and material required to prepare hides for storage and shipment are relatively inexpensive and if not already available, may be obtained from local businesses as donations. Otherwise, they may be purchased for a nominal amount.

Hides can be salted on the ground, a clean surface or you may want to use a locally manufactured table. These can be made of barrels or saw horses and ply wood.

A container of fine table salt or livestock salt (rock salt will not work) will be needed. You will also need a sharp knife for removing excess fat, flesh, tails and tags.

PREPARING THE HIDES FOR SHIPMENT (Continued)

"Kitty litter" or sawdust under the loaded pallets will absorb much of the remaining juices and odor. It will also be appreciated by the truck driver.

Clean up around the salting area is fairly easy. Surgical rubber gloves and old clothing will keep this process safer and more sanitary.

If only a few hides are being prepared for shipment, plastic or cardboard barrels are acceptable. Palletizing of large quantities is preferred as it helps facilitate the quick loading of commercial trucks with the least amount of manpower. This also results in lower transportation costs.

Before being salted, the hide must 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. This means the hide is worthless and should be discarded.

Be very careful when processing hides. Avoid cutting even the smallest holes with the knife. All holes, bullets, arrows or just careless trimming will increase several times 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 the 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.

Before salting the hide, excess fat, flesh and the tail should be removed and discarded. Once this is done, fine table 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!**

After putting on rubber gloves, the salt should be thoroughly rubbed 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.

After 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.

Processing hides that have been allowed to dry out is not cost effective. They must be re-constituted in salt water, and then salted again before shipping. This is a labor-intensive time consuming process that should be avoided.

When hides have been salted and the edges rolled, there are a couple of ways that the hides can be stacked on pallets:

1. 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.
2. In warmer climates, hides tend to spoil more rapidly. It is strongly recommended that these 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.

Be sure to square up the pallet. This will facilitate the loading of the hides onto the commercial trucks with fork- lifts.

Most commercial truck lines will require that the pallets be wrapped with shrink wrap.

When the hides are prepared, the containers of hides can be stored in a secure area until the Director of the National Veterans Service Commission, the Chairman of the Veterans Leather Program or one of the assigned Vice-Chairmen are notified. Their telephone numbers are located in the Elks National Veterans Service Commission Manual, or in various other Grand Lodge publications. These individuals are responsible for coordinating the most cost effective means of transporting the salted hides to the various tanneries.

The Elks National Veterans Service Commission will pay the expenses for the transporting of salted hides from the State collection point to the tanneries.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- No hides should be individually sent to the tanneries.
- No hides should be mailed "C.O.D" or by parcel post.
- Deposit hides at locally designated Lodge collection points as determined by your State Veterans Service Chairman or State Hides / Leather Chairman. The tanneries are not equipped to receive, sort, grade and account for small shipments from the Elks. Because tanneries are extending themselves above and beyond normal expectations, to assist in our committees' effort to serve our most deserving veterans, it is in our best interest to meet their requirements.
- The National Leather Program Chairman will coordinate tannery activities.

TERMS

The following leather industry definitions will assist in working within this program:

“The relative thickness of leather is measured in ounce”

For Example: One ounce equals 1/64 of an inch.

LEATHER INDUSTRY DEFINITIONS

Buckskin:	Deer and elk skins that have hair removed and tanned
Calf's Skin:	From a young bovine
Cattle Hide:	General term for all bovine hides
Cow Hide:	Hide from a bovine that has produced a calf
Doe's Skin:	Sheep or lamb tanned
Deer's Skin:	Deer or elk having grain intact
Hide:	The whole pelt from a large animal
Horse Hide:	From a horse or colt
Leather:	The pelt of an animal that has been tanned
Pelt:	An untanned hide or skin with hair on it
Pig's Skin:	Skin from a swine
Sheep's Skin:	From a mature sheep
Skin:	Pelt from small animals
Side Leather:	Cattle Hide grain leather which has been cut in half prior to processing, forming two sides
Split:	The underneath layer of side leather which has been split
Top Grain:	The upper side of leather

LEATHER AND GLOVE PROCUREMENT

To procure tanned leather or gloves, a requisition (as shown in the National Veterans Service Commission Manual) must be submitted to the National Veterans Service Commission office in Chicago, by the Elk VAVS Representative or the Elk Representative at a State Veteran's Home. The Elk submitting the form must fill in their name and address, as the leather and gloves will be shipped to no other person. Leather cannot be shipped to post office boxes.

The form must be signed by the Chief of Occupational or Recreational Therapy at VA Medical Centers or the person who will supervise the program at State Veteran's Homes.

Requests that are exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Director in Chicago.

It is the responsibility of the Elks receiving the leather and gloves to see that they are only used for intended purpose. It is recommended that the gloves be presented to wheelchair bound veterans by Elk members to receive maximum effect for the veterans and our organization.

CLOSING

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