

## General Field Care Tips

Just as the method of game meat handling directly affects the quality of the product that ends up in your freezer, the same holds true for hunting trophies. Proper field care by you, the sportsman, is THE crucial first step in receiving a quality mount from me, the taxidermist. The ability to skin and completely prepare your trophy is especially important on a hunt that requires you to stay in the field for several days after the animal is taken. *I will gladly take the time to teach you the finer points of trophy care (turning ears, splitting lips, nose, and eyelids, and removing toe bones when necessary).*

To properly handle the hide in the field, the hunter should have in his possession the following items: a small measuring tape, pencil and pad, high quality knife, sharpening stone or steel...or replacement blades, salt (the amount required depends on what is being hunted), strong nylon twine (for removing toe bones), and large bags (type depends on situation).

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Many trophies are ruined in the first few hours after death, which means I can't preserve them for you. Heat and moisture are a hide's absolute worst enemy. As soon as the animal dies, bacteria begin to attack the carcass...which will cause the hair to 'slip' or fall out. Warm, humid weather will increase the growth rate of the bacteria. Once your animal is skinned out, get it into the freezer or to me as soon as possible. If you will be in the field for an extended period of time, and can not salt the hide (see salting below), keep the skin dry and in the shade. If possible, bury the hide in snow. Do NOT put the hide in a plastic bag. Place it in a breathable game bag or burlap sack. This will allow air to circulate, prevent insects from invading and allow fluids and excess heat to escape.

Additionally, avoid dragging the animal. This can cause bald spots and damaged hair. Remember to always leave plenty of skin as well. I can cut off excess hide, but I can't add what I don't have in the first place.

You don't have to remove the skull or paws from inside the skin if you are going to get the hide right into the freezer or to me. Fold, don't roll, the hide. It will allow for quicker, more even thawing. Also, do NOT fold the skull up in the center. It can take days for a skull to freeze completely if wrapped inside the hide and that allows bacteria growth to continue. Be careful around genital areas as well. If you remove them, or damage them, you will lack this detail on a life size mount. I can remove them later if not needed for your mount.

**\*\*\*Salting:** Do NOT salt the hide unless you are proficient in splitting ears, lips, eyelids and nose, removing all excess flesh and fat, and removing toe and tail bones. Once the hide is salted, I can NOT take care of these sensitive areas and the hair will slip in any area that was not completely penetrated by salt. If you are not proficient in these areas, the best course of action is to freeze the hide (or keep it as cold as possible) until you can get it to me.

If you are proficient in these areas, use non-iodized salt. I buy 50 pound bags of fine solar salt at the local mill & feed store. Be sure every inch of the hide gets salt rubbed into it. Let the salt stand on the skin for 24 hours. Shake it off, re-salt & then hang to dry. Be sure to fold/roll the hide prior to it becoming too dry to do so. Hides must be able to be fit into an appropriate size box for shipping to the tannery in the lower 48.

# Skinning & Field Care of Trophies

## Life Size, ½ Life Size & Pedestal Mounts

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If there is any doubt in your mind about what trophy you will have made, skin the animal as you would for a rug. However, if you know that you want a life size, ½ life size or pedestal mount, then a dorsal cut is the appropriate choice.

Before skinning, two measurements should be taken to help me select the proper size form:

1. From the tip of the nose to the base of the tail
2. The circumference at the widest part of the belly

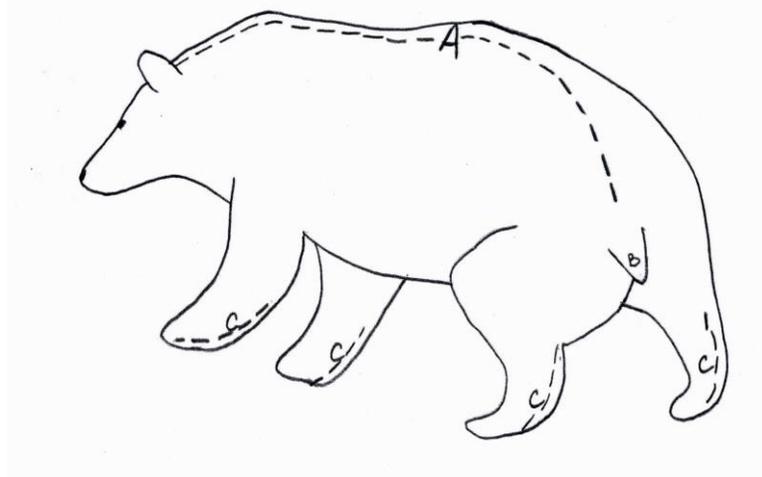
There are three cuts to be made when skinning an animal for a life size, ½ life size or pedestal mount... shown in figure 1.

Roll the animal onto its belly and stretch out straight. Cut (A) should be made starting three inches above where the tail attaches to the body. Insert the tip of your knife into the skin with the blade up. Slide the blade toward the head. Be sure to keep the cut straight and centered along the animal's spine. On bears and fur bearers (fox, lynx, wolf, etc) the incision should end between the ears. On antlered or horned animals, the incision will end in a "Y" to the base of the antlers or horns.

Cut (B) should be made along the underside of the tail from the anus to within ½ inch of tip of tail. Do NOT cut all the way through the tip of the tail. (LIFE SIZE ONLY)

Cut (C) begins at the elbow, down to the pad, around the inside edge of it and across the top of the pad in the hair that separates the toes from the pads. Repeat on opposite arm. Keep your cut straight and centered.

Cut (C) is also made on each hind leg beginning at the knee, down to the pad, around the inside edge of it and across the top of the pad in the hair that separates the toes from the pads. (LIFE SIZE ONLY)



# Skinning & Field Care of Trophies

## Shoulder Mounts

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To properly handle the hide in the field, the hunter should have in his possession the following items: a small measuring tape, pencil and pad, high quality knife, sharpening stone or steel...or replacement blades, salt (the amount required depends on what is being hunted), strong nylon twine, and large bags (type depends on situation).

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Before skinning, two measurements should be taken to help me select the proper size form:

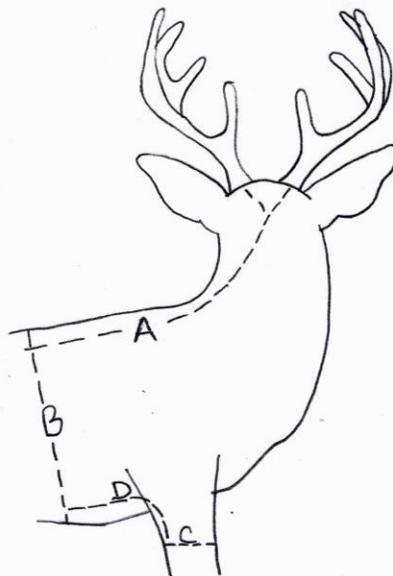
1. From the tip of the nose to the front corner of the eye
2. From the tip of the nose to the back of the skull (measure in a straight line)
3. Around the neck, just below the jaws...be sure to pull the tape tight to allow for the thickness of hair

Six cuts are needed to remove an animal's cape... shown in figure 1.

Incision (A) should be made starting just behind the shoulders. If possible, have a friend hold the head in a straight line. Insert the tip of your knife into the skin with the blade UP. Slide the blade toward the animal's head in a straight line, following the contour of the spine. Stop the incision between the ears on bears and fur bearers (fox, lynx, wolf, etc) and about 4 inches behind the antlers or horns on deer, sheep, goats and antelope. From this point on antlered animals, the cut should branch into a "Y" with each of the forks ending at the base of each antler.

Incision (B) should encircle the entire torso four inches behind the shoulders.

Two cuts (C) are made encircling each foreleg four inches below the brisket. These incisions will be joined to cut (B) with two cuts (D) that run in a straight line starting at the back of each leg.



# Skinning & Field Care of Trophies

## Rugs

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To properly handle the hide in the field, the hunter should have in his possession the following items: a small measuring tape, pencil and pad, high quality knife, sharpening stone or steel...or replacement blades, salt (the amount required depends on what is being hunted), strong nylon twine, and large bags (type depends on situation).

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Before skinning, two measurements should be taken to help me select the proper size form:

1. From the tip of the nose to the front corner of the eye
2. From the tip of the nose to the back of the skull (measure in a straight line)

There are three major cuts to be made when skinning an animal for a rug mount...shown in figure 1.

Roll the animal onto its back and spread the legs out to the sides. Cut (A) should be made starting at the anal opening. Insert the tip of your knife into the skin with the blade up. Slide the blade toward the chin and stop 3 inches below the chin. Be sure to keep the cut centered along the animal's stomach, chest and neck. Return to anal opening and split tail to the tip.

Cut (B) should be made through one pad on a hind foot and run along the back of that leg, through the anus. Repeat the same cut on the opposite leg. Be careful to keep a straight line.

Cut (C) begins through the front foot pad, runs along the bottom of the leg to the elbow, then turns across the chest to cut (A). Stay on the center of the leg UP TO 1" high (toward head). This will allow maximum width on your rug.

Finally, make a cut the width of the toes in the hair that separates the toes from the pads.

