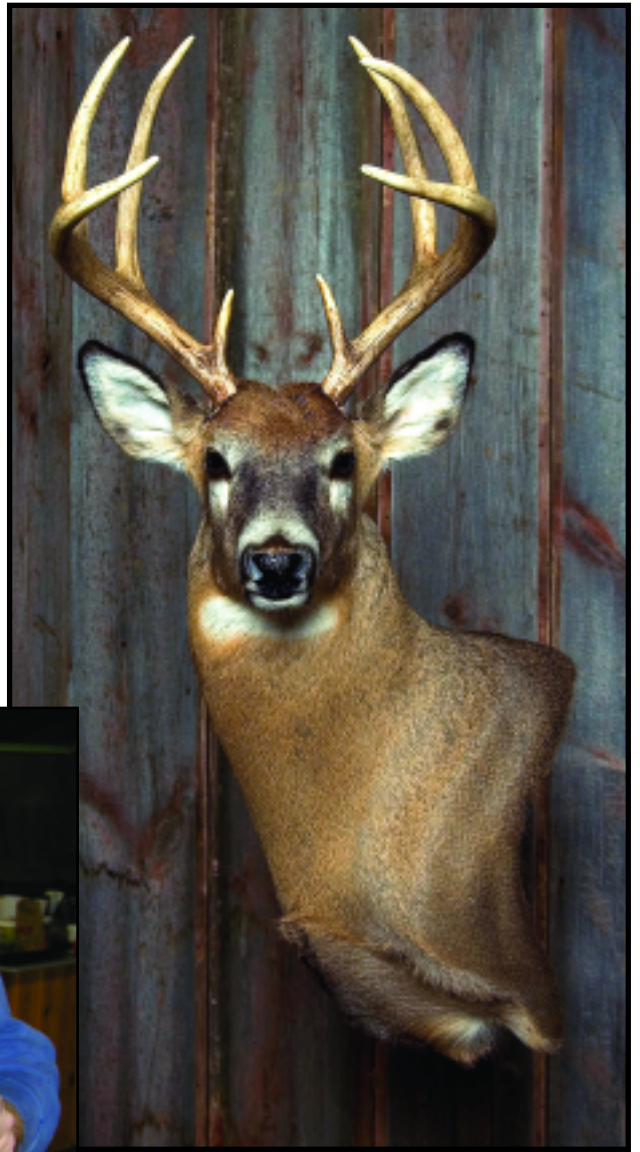


Professional WHITETAIL MOUNTING

*Mounting a deer
for your customer,
NOT a Judge*



Part 1 – Skinning, Fleshing & Auto Tanning

by
**Dan
Rinehart**

I am happy to introduce this new article series on white-tailed deer which will focus on SOLID professional techniques. I'm not going to waste your time and lead you in an unproductive direction with irrelevant competition techniques. Instead, I am going to provide you with techniques that are the foundation for a high quality professional mount that will satisfy your customers.

The backbone, bread-and-butter of the taxidermy industry is the American Sportsman and the taxidermists that service them. Providing a quality product at a fair price is what keeps the "wheels" of the taxidermy industry turning. For years much emphasis has been placed on the importance of taxidermy competition. I would agree that competitions serve their purpose in helping us all progress. However, it should not be misunderstood that **the most important mount is the mount that satisfies your customer – not a judge.**

WITH THIS IN MIND, I WOULD LIKE TO LAY THE groundwork for this article series. *Professional Whitetail Mounting* is designed to provide you with the “no non-sense” techniques for producing a quality professional mount. Both efficiency and quality are equally weighed in each technique, resulting in a final product that makes you money AND initiates the three most important words from your customer – “I LIKE IT!”

So, Let's get started and take a look at our cape.



We have a typical “green” cape. Lip, eye, ear and nose turning are all needed. Let's begin our turning with the lip.

Prior to turning, the lip is one mass. We need to split the lip from the inside edge to the center line in order to get the lip to lay flat for thinning and fleshing.



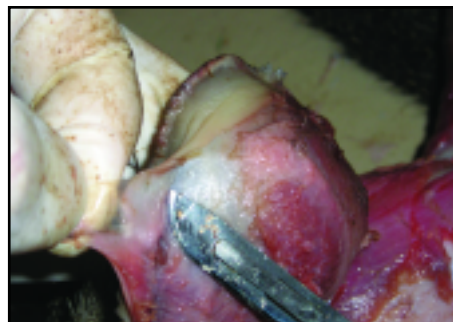
I use a #20 scalpel blade and separate the inside lip from the outside lip. Again, I start on the top inside edge of the lip (where we severed from the skull in the skinning) and cut to the center line of the lip (where the inside rolls to the outside).



Once the center of the lip is reached in one area, continue releasing the inside and outside lip 360 degrees around the lip-line. The lips are fully turned when all lip material can be laid flat.



This is a perfect example of a fully split area of the lip. Inside and outside lip can be laid flat making later fleshing possible.



This center lower lip is a little more tricky due to the skin being thinner. Just take a little more time and exercise a little more caution.

The lower lip is completely turned when the center line is reached and the lip can lay flat.



The same technique is performed on the upper lip as well.

With the lip completely split, we can move on to splitting the nose. Begin by finding the center cartilage (known as the septum). Where the septum intersects the back of the nose pad—cut through the cartilage until you reach the back side of the nose pad.



Similar to splitting the lip, split around the nostril so that the inner and outer nostril material is separated and the material can be laid flat. The nostril should be split 360 degrees around the nostril.



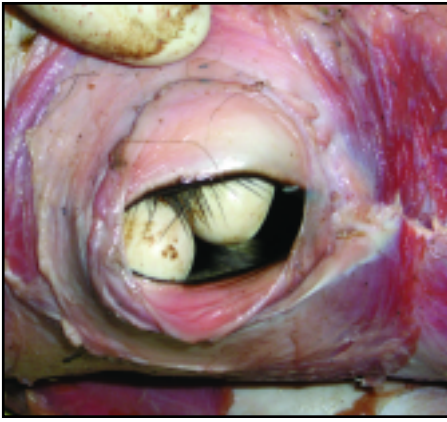
When the nostril is fully split, it is possible to insert a fleshing cone into the nostril to act as a solid fleshing surface.



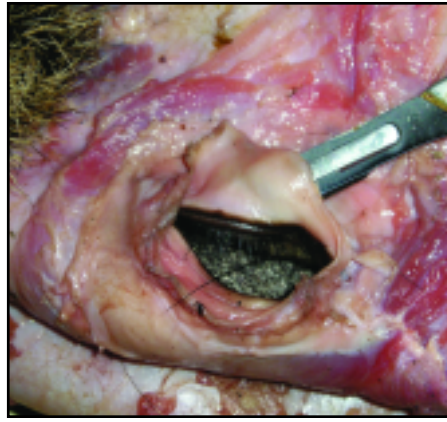
This photo demonstrates both nostril split and the center cartilage septum removed.



Next, the inner eye skin needs to be split. The technique is similar to the splitting of the lip and nostrils.



The smooth inner eye skin is visible around the eye.



Use your scalpel to separate the inner eye skin from the outer eye lid. Split to the center edge of the eye lid.



The inner skin has been separated to the center of the eye lid. Continue splitting around the full circumference of the eye.



I have placed a fleshing cone in a fully split eye to show the results.



Once the eyes are split, all the excess flesh around the eye is removed with a scalpel.



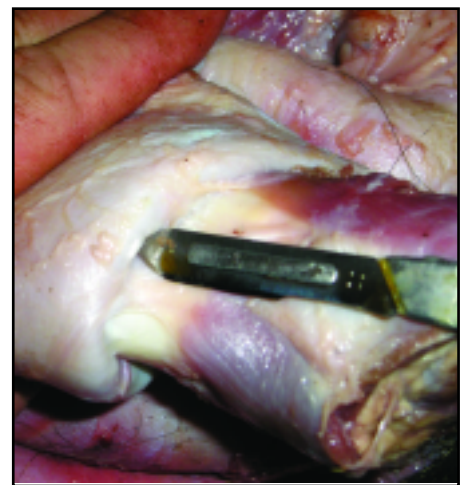
Our eye is fully split, fleshed and ready for tanning.



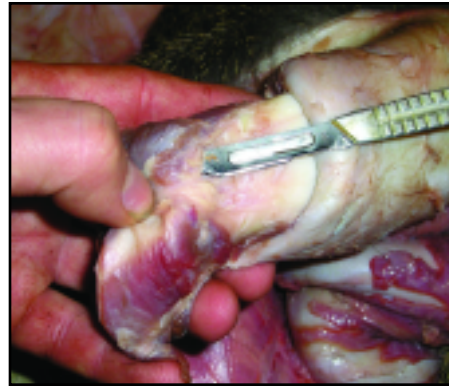
With the Lips, nose and eyes split and rough fleshed – we can move on to the final area to be split—the ears. You can clearly see the ear butt and ear canal. The first step in splitting the ears is to skin around the ear base, releasing the hide from the inner ear, flesh and cartilage.



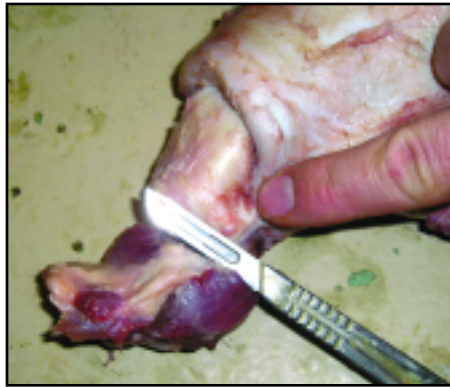
When skinning around the ear base, always place your index finger in the "V-Corner" of the ear. This will help you locate where this corner is located, preventing the possibility of cutting through the "V".



Skin around the ear base with your scalpel. Continue until you are past the ear base musculature and into the cartilage area.



We have released the skin past the ear base flesh. Now the meat needs to be removed from the ear canal. Start above the meat and flesh back toward the ear canal. Release the meat 360 degrees around the ear base, finishing at the ear canal.



When the flesh has been released and peeled back to the ear canal, relocate the "V-Corner" of the ear. Cut the ear canal and flesh from the ear 1/4" below the "V-Corner".



Now it is time to split the entire ear so we can turn the ear inside-out. When splitting the ears, it is helpful to use specially designed tools such as these ear splitters. Place the tips of the ear splitters between the inner and outer ear and carefully begin prying.



It is VERY important that as you are prying, you use your thumb and index finger to hold the hide to the tips of the ear splitter tool. This prevents the tips from sliding around and gives you control of where you are splitting.



As you are splitting, press the bottom hand of the grip against your workbench while pushing down on the top grip. This will help you apply pressure without causing fatigue to your hand.



Continue splitting straight out to the tip. Be careful not to split too far causing the end of the ear to "blow" open. Try to get within 1/4" of the ear tip.



With the center split, now we can split the bottom edge of the ear. Again, hold the hide tight against the tips of the splitters as you squeeze the handles, separating the inner from the outer ear.



Finally, the top edge of the ear needs to be split. This is done with the same process as we just used along the bottom edge of the ear.



With the center, bottom edge and upper edge of the ear fully split, we can turn the ear inside-out. Turning an ear inside-out is similar to turning a sock inside-out. Take your time and work it slowly. If tendons or membrane prevent you from turning the ear, simply cut through the material, allowing you to continue turning the ear.

This is an ear that has been turned successfully.



Our initial splitting has taken us within 1/4" of the edge. Now we need to finish splitting to the edge. You can use a scalpel for this final splitting or you can use your thumb to pry and separate to the edge. Take caution as you get close to the edge. If you go too far, you will "blow" the edge of the ear out requiring repair work later.



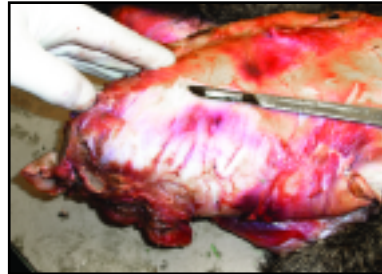
I have separated to the edge and the ear is fully split and ready for tanning.

Turn the other ear with the same process.

Now it is time to do some rough fleshing in the facial/muzzle area. Surface meat and membrane need to be removed so that the tanning chemicals can access the skin of the cape easier. For rough fleshing the facial area I use a smaller fleshing beam such as this wooden beam.



The muzzle fits perfectly over the smaller fleshing beam, allowing for more accessible fleshing. I use a scalpel to perform the rough muzzle fleshing.



The result of the fleshing is the removal of meat and membrane through the muzzle, forehead, cheeks and ear bases.

When fleshing the neck and shoulders I place the hide over a larger beam and use a couple different fleshing knives. I start with an "English" style fleshing knife and remove the large pieces of meat and membrane using a slicing action.

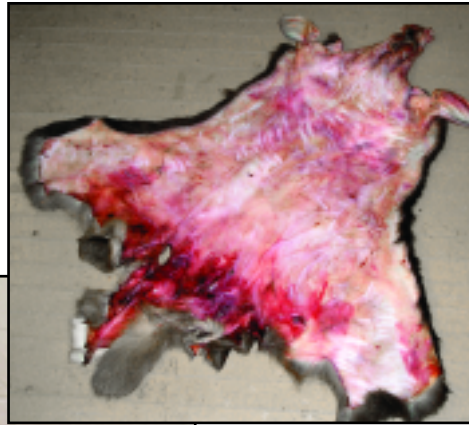


Simply "pushing" the knife is not enough. A "slicing" movement is necessary to shave the meat/membrane from the hide.

For smaller more detailed areas I use a "beaver knife".



Rough fleshing and turning of the ears, nose, lip line and eyes is complete. We can now move on to tanning the hide.



We will be using the revolutionary AUTO TANNER to tan our hide in only 4 hours. Let's take a look at how the AUTO TANNER works.

The AUTO TANNING system uses proprietary tanning crystals (Bucktan Crystals) and the physical action of pressure to completely and quickly replace organic material with tanning agents. Through osmosis, organic material is released from each hide molecule and replaced with tanning agents. This process is known as "**Osmotic Interaction**".

Osmotic interaction is simply the replacement of organic material within the molecules of a hide with tanning/preserving agents. The pressure tanning system increases the percentage of tanning molecules per cubic inch, replacing organic material within the molecule with tanning agents (osmotic interaction). The result being that the "osmotic interaction" of tanning agents in hide molecules is increased and accelerated.

PRESSURE IS THE KEY

Every day example: At 30,000 feet on Mount Everest there are fewer oxygen molecules per square inch than there are at sea level. The reason for this difference in oxygen density is PRESSURE. When oxygen is denser (sea level) in the lungs, more oxygen is available per square inch for saturation of lung tissue. Thus, increased oxygen molecules per square inch of breathing air directly correlates to increased lung absorption of oxygen molecules. The same is true for tanning a hide. The more pressure within the tanning cylinder, the more tanning molecules are pressed into a given square inch of hide material. Thus, pressure assures thorough penetration throughout the hide in far less time.

Pressure tanning crystals consist of the following 3 chemicals (proprietary content & coating):

Aluminum Sulfate – Acidic tanning agent, sets hair

Salt – pulls natural fluids out of hide

Soda Ash – (time released neutralizer) slowly increases pH

Aluminum Sulfate is an **acidic tanning agent** that both "opens" the hide (lowering pH) and saturates hide molecules/fibers. As aluminum sulfate lowers the pH, the hide is puffed up, creating a more porous hide which more efficiently accepts tanning agents. Once the hide is puffed-up, the **pressurized** aluminum sulfate replaces organic material within each hide molecule with the aluminum sulfate tanning agent. At the same time, the erratically woven hide fibers are coat-

ed with aluminum sulfate tanning agents. Note: With the pressure tanning system “pickling” is done automatically in the process.

Salt pulls natural fluids, dirt and contaminants out of the hide, transferring those fluids from the hide and sending them into the waste fluid. Salt also prevents “acid swell”.

Soda Ash is a “time-released” neutralizer that slowly increases the pH of the tanning solution. The result is that soda ash neutralizes (closes hide tissue) the hide and “locks-in” the tanning agents. The important (proprietary) characteristic of the soda ash in the pressure tanning crystals is that it is “time-released”. The aluminum sulfate must have adequate time to open, penetrate and saturate hide molecules and hair fibers/roots. Therefore, the effectiveness of the soda ash must be put on hold for a time. Once the aluminum sulfate has penetrated the hide molecules (osmosis) and coating the hide fibers, soda ash is released, “locking-in” the tanning agents and securing the hair root.

AUTO TANNER process using BuckTan Crystals

1. Remove major meat and fat.
2. Turn ears, lips, eyes and nose.
3. Place in tanner, mix 1 pound tanning crystals and 1 gallon of warm water per hide.
4. Pressurize tank to 50 psi and set timer for 1 hour.



Remove from tanner and “final” flesh hide. Final fleshing includes trimming and thinning the nose, lips and eyes.





When trimming the eye lip for a deer to be mounted with a clay set eye, save 1/8" of inner eye skin to be tucked into the clay during mounting.



For mounting a deer eye with a pre-set eye, trim away all inner eye skin.



The electric Mini Fleisher is an excellent tool for fleshing the neck and shoulders. The Mini Fleisher is extremely controllable through a foot pedal.



Professional fleshing wheels such as the Quebec Pro fleisher provide the highest level of hide thinning and fleshing. The Quebec fleisher uses a rotating blade with a "knife edge" that slices the layers of the hide.



5. Add 1/3 cup of softening oil and 1 capfull of Scour to tanning solution, place hide back in tanner, re-pressurize tanner to 50 psi for 2nd time and set timer for 3 hours.



6. After 3 hours remove hide from tanner and quickly (2-4 minutes) rinse in coldwater/Dawn® dish soap and spin-dry in washing machine or tumble hide in corn cob grit until clean.

Our hide is thoroughly tanned and ready for mounting. At this point we can mount the deer or place the tanned hide in a plastic bag and freeze the hide until we are ready to mount the deer at a later time.

The next time we get together we will be going over the manikin preparation, antler setting, nostril/septum prep and cutting the lip slot. Until then, enjoy your taxidermy!

Dan Rinehart is a taxidermist and owner of Rinehart Taxidermy School & Supply, WI. Dan also performs wholesale fish taxidermy for taxidermists throughout the United States. If you would like information about Dan's wholesale fish mounting service, supplies or the Rinehart Taxidermy School, you can contact him at Rinehart Taxidermy School & Supply, 203 South Main St., Edgerton, WI 53534 or call toll free 866-296-2782 or 608-884-3047. •

