

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

Professional WHITETAIL MOUNTING

by Dan Rinehart

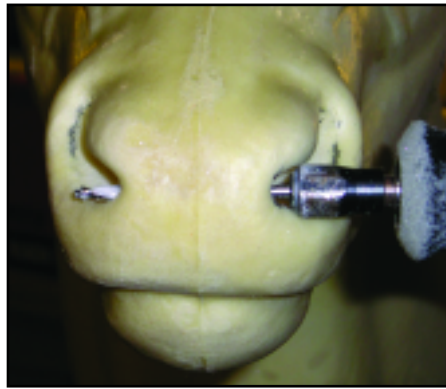
Part 2 Manikin Prep, Antler Set, Eye Set, Nostril/Lip Slot

Welcome back —

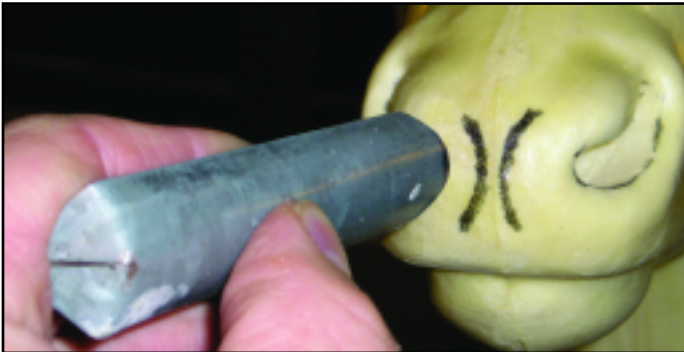
I hope you enjoyed the first part of this article series. Throughout Part 2 of “Mounting a Whitetail” we will be covering everything involved in getting the manikin ready for mounting the hide. We’ll start with preparing the surface of the manikin to accept hide past and move on to antler setting, lip slot – nostril – tear duct cutting, septum insertion and finally eye setting. The accuracy and quality we perform throughout these procedures will have a direct impact on the ultimate quality of our mount. So let’s jump right in and get to it!



First, the nostrils need to be opened so a septum can be inserted. I have used a sharpie to draw a line that indicates the edge of the inner nostril. All removal of material is done inside this line. DO NOT cut into and remove material along the rounded outside edge of the nostril opening.



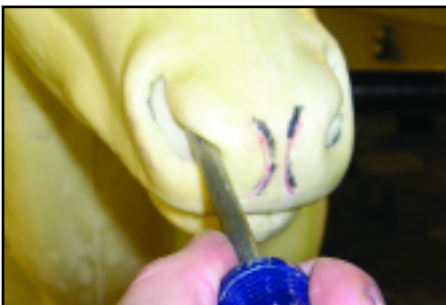
I use a 1/8" drill bit in an electric grinder to open the inner nostril area. Open the nostril straight across from nostril to nostril. Then open the rest of the inner nostril area on both sides. All nostril material should be removed between the nostrils allowing for placement and insertion of a Speed Septum.



I have drawn arched lines on the center of the nose pad to show where the Speed Septums are inserted. The Speed Septum Tool is used to cut a pathway for the septum placement.



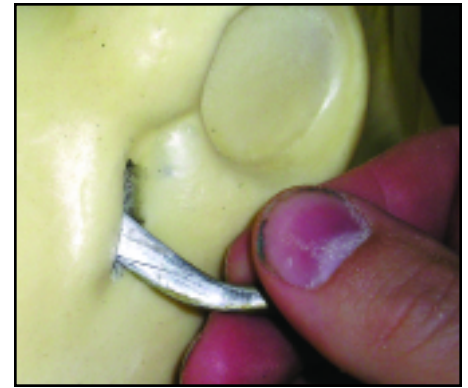
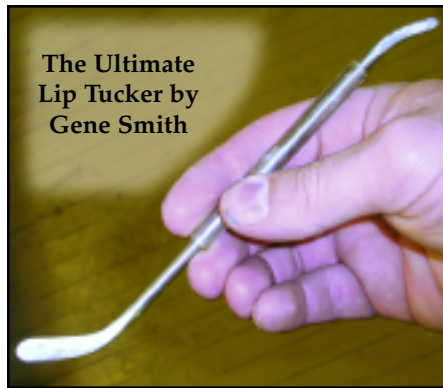
Bend the Speed Septum to match the arch of the septum slot. Feed Speed Septum into slot, extending back past nostril opening. Note: veining should be facing in so that the veins appear indistinct when viewed. Use a scalpel to trim Speed Septum flush with nose pad surface. You will have enough Speed Septum remaining for the other side. Use the Speed Septum Tool to cut the slot on the other side. Insert and trim Speed Septum same as before—veining facing inward.



I create a deep nostril by inserting a screwdriver. Align the screwdriver shaft on the inside nostril opening and press back at a slight inward angle.

This shows the septum as well as the nostril slot created with the screwdriver. The transition from the nostril slot to the septum is rough at this point.

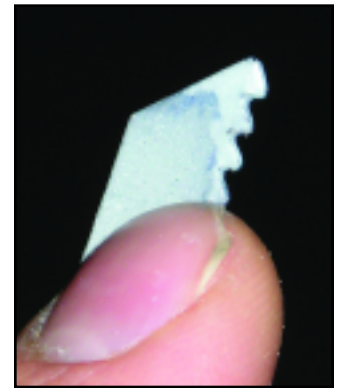
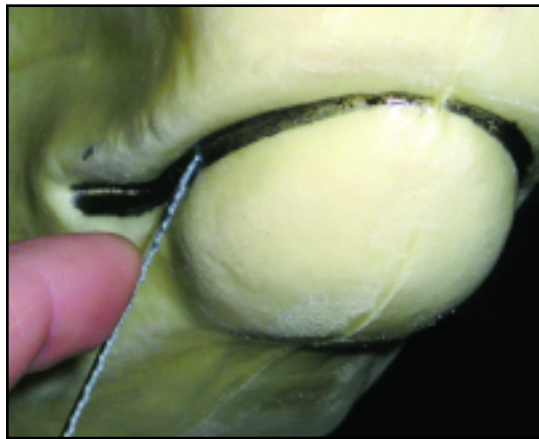
Smooth the transition along the nostril slot and septum transition. Press or "form" the foam with a modeling tool.



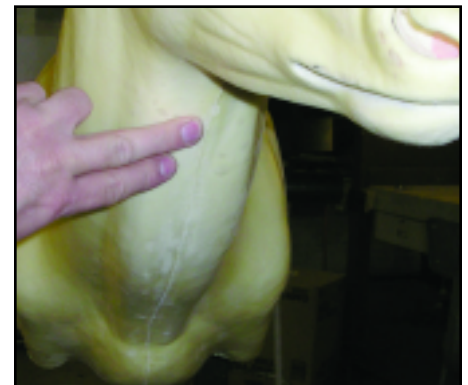
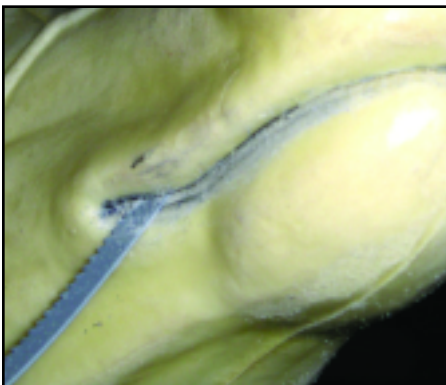
Next, we will cut the tear duct slots. Using a Sharpie I have marked the tear duct area. It is along this line that we need to cut a slot in order to provide an area to tuck the inner tear duct skin. I cut the tear duct slot with a thin-edged stainless steel lip tucking tool (known as the Ultimate Lip Tucker by Gene Smith). Cut the tear duct slot 1/4" deep, angling the slot in and forward (toward the center of the muzzle). Cut the tear duct slot on both sides. The tear ducts are prepped and ready for mounting.



Again, I have used a sharpie to mark where the lip slot is to be cut. Notice that I have made the marker line a little thicker at the back corner to accommodate for the extra lip material in this area. I use a hand-held tool known as a "Lipper Tool" to cut the lip slot. Notice that the angle I am cutting is up and in at approximately a 10 degree angle.



The lip slot is cut 1/4" deep. Only the outer edge of the Lipper Tool is actually used.



Cut the lip slot from one side to the other. Both back corners should be twice the width of the regular lip slot. Run some fine sandpaper along the lip slot to smooth and finish the lip slot. The lip slot is now complete and ready for mounting.

All manikins have a seam remaining from the mold. This seam needs to be sanded smooth.

It is particularly important to sand and smooth the seam along detailed areas such as the face and muzzle. NOTE: once seam is sanded smooth, use a coarser grit sandpaper to scuff the entire surface of the manikin. This rougher scuffing will help the hide paste bond the hide to the manikin.



In preparation for coating the form with a sealer, paper towel is placed in the nostril to protect the septum from the spray-on adhesive sealer.





I coat the entire manikin with Manikin Prep adhesive spray. Manikin Prep seals the manikin and provides a surface that hide paste will grab onto and bond the hide to the manikin. Apply Manikin Prep to all areas of the manikin, especially concave/recessed areas. While the Manikin Prep is still wet, sprinkle sawdust into muscle recesses.



The transition along the shoulder/neck is a concave that requires good adhesion. Sprinkle sawdust in this area.

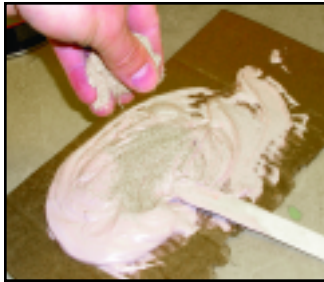
Look for any other recessed area and sprinkle sawdust. Be sure to sprinkle sawdust throughout the side of the face, lower jaw and bridge of the muzzle. The manikin surface is now prepped and ready for mounting.



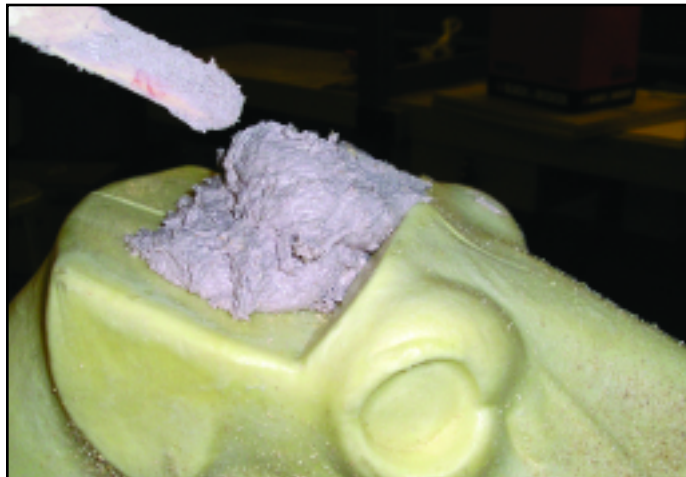
To properly position and secure the antlers, the skull base must first be trimmed so that proper placement and angle of the antlers can be achieved. I have drawn two lines that indicate where I will make my initial cuts to trim the skull plate.



Both cuts have been made and proper placement and angle of the antlers is now possible. Notice that the angle matches between the forehead of the manikin and skull. We are ready to anchor the skull to the manikin and lock in the antler angle by created a solid base of Bondo.



Thoroughly mix the cream hardener with the Bondo. Once the hardener is thoroughly mixed, add sawdust to the Bondo. The sawdust makes the Bondo less runny and holds shape better. Continue to add sawdust until the Bondo is thick and holds its shape.



Place the sawdust thickened Bondo on the antler deck of the manikin.



Press the skull plate into the Bondo until the forehead of the manikin and the skull plate match. Be sure that the antlers are balanced from side to side and that the back of the skull plate is not "kicked" up too much. NOTE: the back of the skull plate should flow toward the back of the manikin.



You want to be sure that the distance between the antler burr and the back corner of the manikin match the hide in this area. After the tanning of the hide I took this measurement on the hide and found the distance to be 2 1/4". Notice that I have placed the antler burr 2" from the back corner of the eye. I use a measurement less than the original measurement to ensure that I have plenty of extra skin in this area and I won't be tight in this area during mounting.



Some of the Bondo will squish out along the skull base. After the Bondo hardens this extra material can be trimmed away. However, you are going to want to trim immediately after the Bondo kicks (while it is still warm). If you wait, the Bondo will become rock-hard and unworkable.



I have removed the extra material along the right side of the skull plate. Now I will clean up along the back and left side. With the Bondo hardened, the skull plate has a solid base and is ready for attachment to the manikin.



I have marked where I will be inserting my 3" drywall screws to secure the antlers to the manikin.



I pre-drill the holes so that the screws will be snug but nonbinding. **NOTE: Do Not pre-drill into the wooden head-board in the manikin!**



Using a side to side pattern (similar to tightening the head of an engine), slowly snug all screws. Once all screws are evenly snug, your antlers are firmly attached.



Using Crittler Clay, smooth the skull plate to the manikin by rebuilding musculature. Be careful not to over-build with the Crittler Clay.



There should be room to place your finger under the backside of the antler pedicel. If your finger does not fit in this area, you have over-filled with Crittler Clay.



Notice that there is not any clay on the top of the head. The reason for this is that there is not any muscle or membrane in this area to rebuild – so nothing is needed.



Also notice that the antler burrs are free of Crittler Clay. Again, this area was void of muscle or tissue. Therefore, there is no need to place clay around the antler base.



Our antlers are attached and skull plate is smoothed with Crittler Clay.



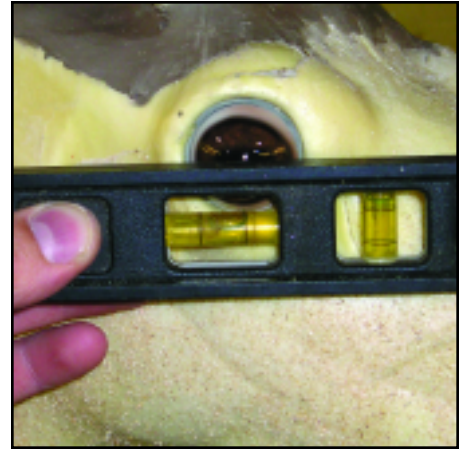
Our final process in the prep-work is the eye setting. Prior to setting the eyes, we need to level the back of the manikin as well as the tear duct corners. Simply place your level along the backboard of the manikin and adjust your mounting stand until you have a level bubble. Lock the mounting stand. To aid in the leveling process, I have marked the tear ducts on both sides. This mark will be our reference point for leveling from the forward angle. Once the tear ducts are leveled, we can begin setting the eyes.



Place a very thin layer (1/8") of clay in the eye socket base. This thin base provides a bedding for the eye to press into and hold in position.



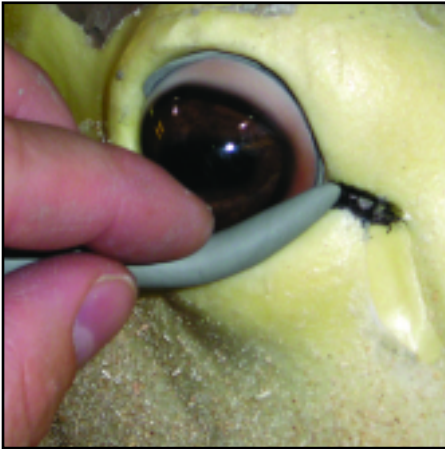
Press the eye into position and visually level the pupil the best you can.



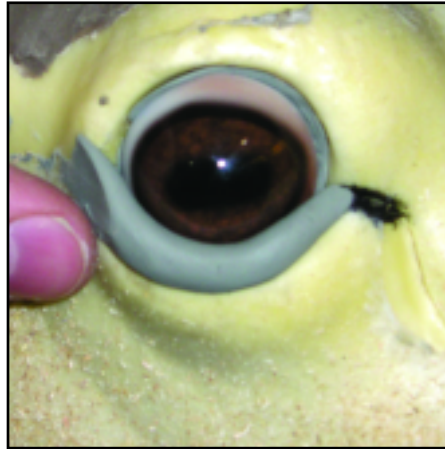
Verify the level of the pupil and adjust if needed. With both eyes leveled, we can use Critter Clay to rebuild the eye anatomy and create expression in the mount.



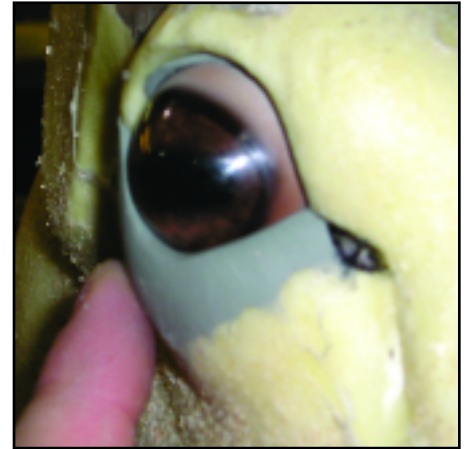
I use a "3 coil" system for setting mammal eyes. Make the first coil by rolling the clay on my workbench. Be sure that the end is tapered to a point.



Place the tapered edge of the coil on the tear duct corner and arch the coil along the bottom of the eye.



Use your finger to sever the coil at the back corner of the eye.



Feather the clay to the manikin. The bottom swell of the eye is created.



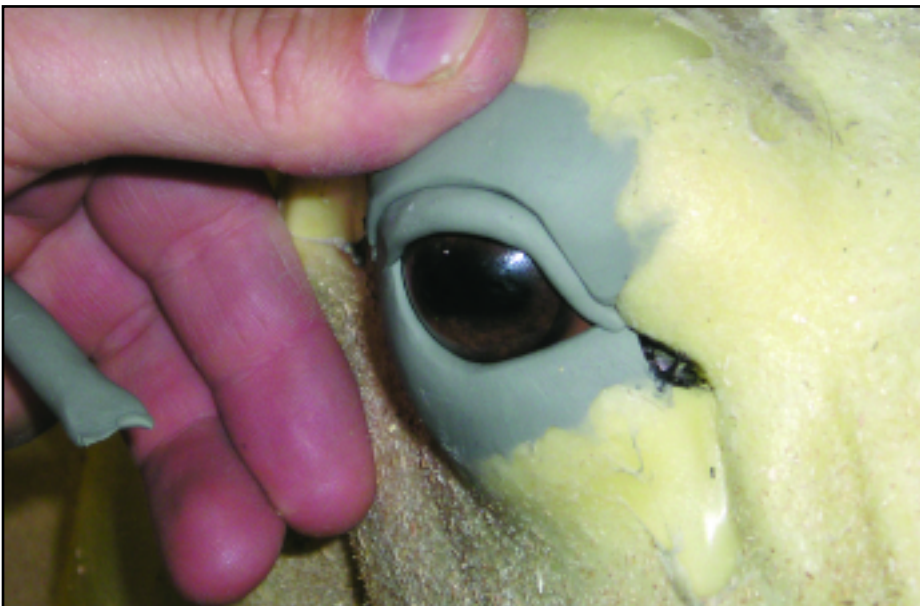
Next, roll a thinner coil of clay for the eyelid. Place the tapered end of the coil at the tear duct and create a quick arch out from the tear duct, rising upward.



Continue the arching rise until you reach the upper corner of the eye. Then begin a consistent and subtle arch toward the back corner.



Finally, roll a third coil (the largest) and place above the upper eyelid. This coil creates the upper eye swell.



Again, feather the upper eye swell coil with the manikin. Our eye set is complete. Do the same on the other eye.

Our manikin is now fully prepped, antlers secured and eyes set. Now we can move on to the part that we all have been waiting for *THE MOUNTING*. Mounting is Part 3 of this article series. So, be sure to join me in the next issue for "Professional Mounting of a Whitetail Deer"! •