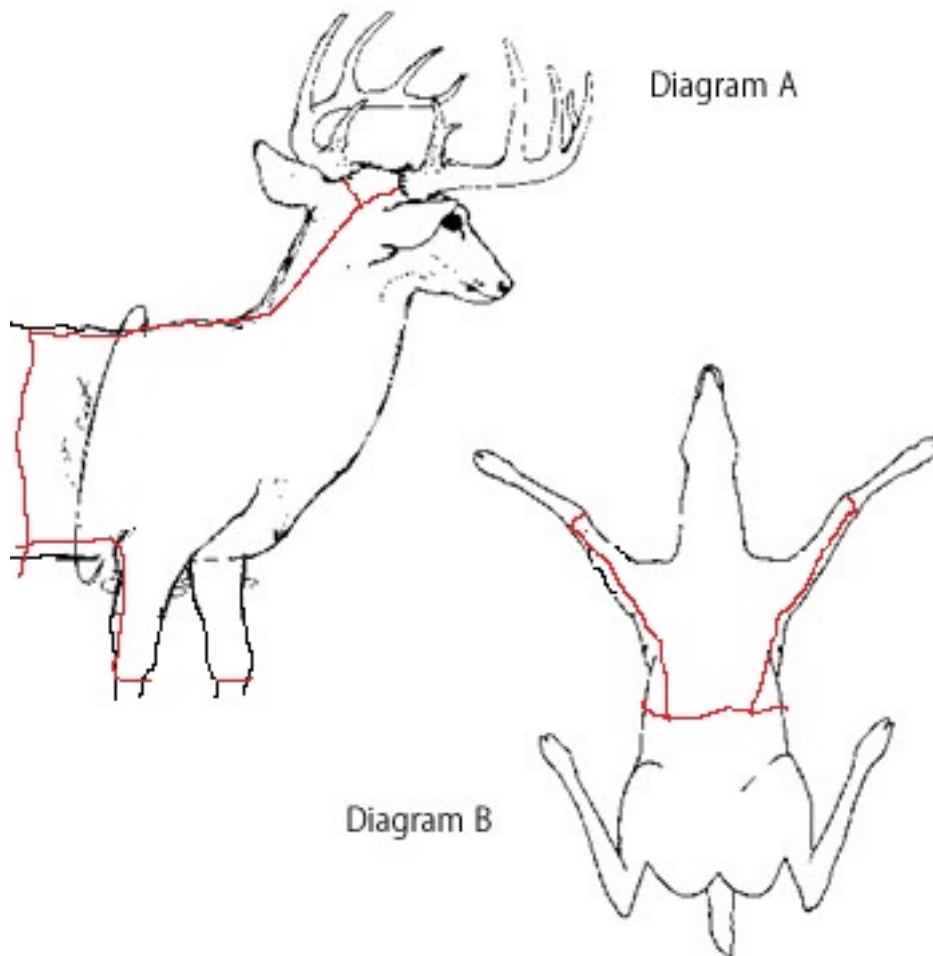


In the field

For those that have not capped an animal yet and want to get their next trophy mounted, here are some tips.

Once you shoot the Trophy and it is more than 25 Degrees try and get the trophy to some shade as soon as possible. The body of animals start to break down as soon as you kill them. Heat and particularly combined with moisture speed this process up.

A common mistake that is made happens when the initial cuts are made.



First cut is around the girth about half way between front and back legs. This cut can go crooked if the animal is laying in an awkward position. With all the cuts you have to take note of which way the skin is pulled or try to position the animal so the skin sits normal.

The second cut is around the knee. This should be close to the knee. Some people cut closer to the chest and in some cases that will not be enough cape for the taxidermist.

Next cut is important. This is done from the back of the leg, the side that is facing towards the back leg. The cut should be heading towards the back leg, up to the cut that went around the girth. Do not cut in towards the centre of the chest. A lot of people do this, and very often this will leave a short cape, which means that the skin will have to be restitched or mount will have to be shortened.

The last cut is up the centre of the back. Cut up to half way between the ears and the horns or antlers. Then make a v cut to the base of the horns or antlers.

After carefully skinning out the animal you can cut it off at the base of the neck at the atlas joint and work on the face or take it to the taxidermist. We charge to skin out animals for clients. You need to cool down the cape and head and not let the skin side dry out. So once it is cool you can fold the skin side to skin side and this will prevent it from drying out.



The tools that we use to take the skin of the head are a scalpel with a no22 blade or a small sharp blade similar will do, a skinning knife with a nice curved edge and a flat screwdriver that has had the front rounded off a little bit, so as not to cut through the skin so easily.



This should be the cuts that you ended up with from caping the skin of the main body-----



Continue to skin around the head to loosen the skin from around the ear butts. Cut through the ear butt along the side of the skull, making sure that you stay close to the bone.



To take the skin off from around the antler, you may be able to pull the skin by hand, peeling it from around the bases. It may help to start it with a knife. Using a dull object such as a flat screwdriver will also work to peel the skin from the bases of coronet. I do not recommend a knife other than to start under the coronet, and then use a screwdriver to tear off from coronet. The pedicel part needs to be cut. Animals with horns need to be cut around where the hair finishes and the horn starts. A bit difficult between the horns with goats, but possible.



Skin down the face until you notice the eye orbit cartilage (dotted line) and skin close to the cartilage. You will start notice a blueish hue through the membrane, which is the actual eye. Place a finger in the eye hole of the hair side and pull. Continue to cut along the eye orbit and cut through the bluish area, skin until the eye skin has been completely cut trough, making sure not to cut into the eyelid itself.



To remove the skin from the tear duct, pull the skin from the eyehole. If the skin does not freely peel from the bone, carefully skin with the knife close to the bone, coming from below, while pulling the skin.



Skin down the muzzle until you can feel a hollow spot in the mouth area. Cut through into the cheek and then continue to cut down towards the front of the face along the tooth line while you are peeling the skin of the face. Continue this until you get near the nose and about the same distance at the chin.



Flip the skin back over and cut along the inside gum line, along the mandible. Continue the cut down inside the mouth. Also cut through the nasal cartilage from this side. Finish the skinning.

Now to keep the cape in good shape, treat it as you would Meat, let cool, freeze as soon as possible, or deliver ASAP. If freezing make sure you put skin into a good, sealed plastic bag to avoid freezer burn. Do not salt at this stage, as ears, lips and nose have not been turned yet.



When cutting antlers from the skull, start by cutting 1 ½ inches below back of skull or just above where the spinal cord goes in, continue down through lower ½ or 2/3 of eye sockets, then through nose bridge. Be sure to leave the front half of the eyes and nose bridge intact if possible. Doing this will leave valuable reference to customize the mount and also it can be put onto shield until ready to mount or you change your mind about getting it mounted. Remove the eyes, brain and extra meat, then boil skull for 1 to 2 hours to help remove the meat and clean the skull. You can add some baking soda or washing detergent to water to help with the process.

This is how to turn the ears, nose and lips and how to salt and prepare the skin for storage or the taxidermist.



Cut around the ear bulb, separating the meat from the skin and slowly working your way towards the cartilage. Once you have the meat separated as shown in the picture above, you can lift the ear by holding onto that lump and slowly cutting up to and down the side of the cartilage. The cartilage stays on the inside ear skin and the back outside ear skin is separated from that cartilage. When starting to separate the outside skin from the cartilage, be careful not to cut through the skin at the bottom of the ear opening. Cut down along the side of the cartilage as far as you can. In general you will get about half way without too much trouble. When separating the back of the ear skin from the cartilage, you have to make sure that once you reach as far as you can cut, you are right against the cartilage with no selvage still attached. You will know you have done it right when the cartilage looks smooth and does not have skin tissue on it any more. The reason for this is, when you are using your fingers or tool to separate the skin, it is a lot easier to tear it off the cartilage, then try and push through the skin selvage layers.



When you have gone as far as you can with the knife, you can now remove the lump of meat at the base of the ear. Just trim it off the cartilage, being careful not to cut into the cartilage. Then using your fingers, push them into the ear between the cartilage and the back ear skin. In most ears, you can now tear the two sides apart. This step is easier with some ears than others, and requires a bit of feel and manipulation with your fingers. Go as far as you can and then get your screwdriver and carefully finish separating the skin off the cartilage. You have to work the screwdriver carefully back and forth inside the ear. If you just push it straight through, it may poke a hole into the skin. When at the edges of the ear, be very careful not to go through them. If you do make a hole, it is not ruined. Just try not to make it any bigger. If you tear through the skin in the middle of the ear, you may have

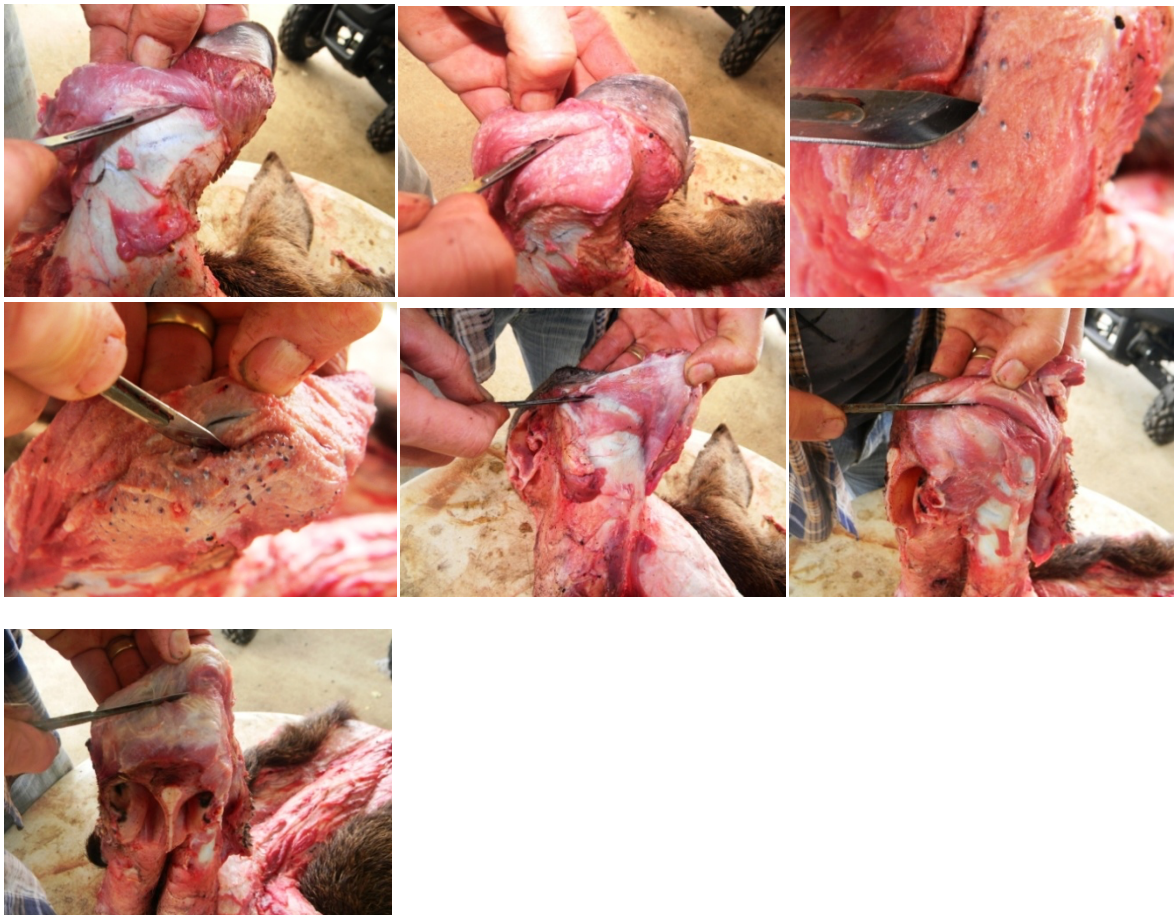
to get the scalpel in there and skin a little bit past the hole before you try pushing it off with the screwdriver or fingers again. Some ears you will have to skin with a knife all the way, as the skin will not separate from the cartilage. In these cases, use something like the screwdriver to push from the inside of the ear as you are turning it. This will allow you to put some pressure on the ear skin, as you are pulling it away from the cartilage and exposing the selvage line between the cartilage and the back ear skin. Cut along that white looking line that you create as you push the ear down on the tool.



Once you have turned the ear, you can finish off the ear edges that you did not separate fully. The ear will look something like the pictures above. You don't have to cut right to the edge. It is ok to leave 2 to 3 millimetres unturned, as the salt will get to that without a problem, but if you can get to the edges than that is better.



Now to turning the lips. This is a fairly simple operation. You are basically separating the smooth part of the lip from the hair side of the skin. This is to allow the salt to penetrate the skin quickly at the lip edges and later the tanning chemicals at the taxidermist.



Starting at the bottom lip, separate the meat from the skin. Holding the chin as above, use the thumb to pull back the meat and lip as you separate it from the chin skin. You will know that you are close to the skin, when you see the little hair roots. Do not go closer to the skin then that. Cut to the edge of the lip. Do this right around the mouth.



You will be left with excess lip and meat as shown in the above picture. You can trim this off and leave about 2 to 3 cm of lip, or about 3 to 4 cm if open mouth mount is required. The lip should look like the third picture above.



Now to the nose. Starting at the back of the nose, separate the cartilage from the skin, being careful not to cut through the back of the nostril, as shown in first picture above. Then you have to slit down the middle of the two nostrils to separate them. Finish off by opening up each nostril to allow salt to penetrate properly. It should look something like the pictures above.



Your finished skin should look a bit like the pictures above. This skin was cut a bit short on the body by the client. It should have a bit more shoulder, legs and brisket length if you are planning on a wall pedestal or extended shoulder mount. When laying the skin out for salting, make sure you stretch the neck as wide as possible, as this will help the taxidermist to stretch the hide back to its original size. Salting and drying should be done in the shade and out of the weather if possible. If outside,

cover the cape with something over night to keep off the dew, but make sure you remove the covering in the morning to allow the air to get to it.



Start by putting salt around all of the nooks and folds, eg around the ears, nostrils, lips, under the chin, eye sockets and any other folds. When ready to salt the face, first place plenty of salt on the neck skin then fold the face skin onto the heavily salted neck skin, making sure the face skin is stretched out and there are no folds in it.

Basically, you have to make sure there is salt on every part of the meat side of the entire skin and that there are no parts folded onto each other with no salt in between. If it is dry weather and you have used plenty of salt, you should not need to repeat the salting. If the weather is very humid, it is best to shake all the salt off after one day, and resalt the skin with fresh salt. Once skin is dry, but still pliable, fold it up into a neat size. Fold hair side in and leave the face on the outside and not folded into the middle. This way, when the cape is stored for a while, the most vulnerable part of it can be inspected for insect damage or undesirable rehydration. If the face skin is folded into the cape it is not visible and could get moist from humidity or attacked by insects and you would not know what is happening. The face attracts moisture and insects faster than the rest of the cape.

Once the cape is folded, place it into a cloth bag that will keep insects out, but allow the cape to breathe and not sweat. Store in a cool dry place. You can also place the cape into a plastic bag, before it is totally dry and put it into a freezer. This is the best and safest way for long term storage.

I hope this will help you with skinning your next trophy.

