

TAXIDERMY FIELD CARE

Caping, the process of skinning out a trophy animal, is best left to the taxidermist. Their experience skinning, especially in the delicate nose, mouth, eyes, and ears is invaluable towards producing a quality mount. Damage to a hide is costly to repair, and sometimes the damage can simply not be fixed by the taxidermist.

Many trophies are ruined in the first few hours after death. As soon as the animal dies, bacteria will begin to attack the carcass. Warm, humid weather accelerates bacteria growth. In remote areas, or areas not near to your taxidermist, a competent person may be required to cape out the hide in order to preserve it.

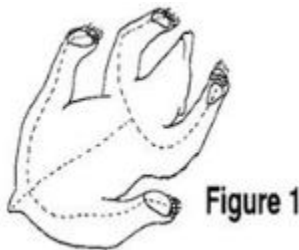
Every taxidermist has a preferred method of caping a hide. Contact your taxidermist prior to your hunt in order to get instructions on their caping requirements. However, the following techniques are generally acceptable.

Skinning life-sized big-game

There are two major methods of skinning for large, life-sized mounts such as deer, elk or bear. These methods are the flat incision and the dorsal method.

The Flat Incision

The flat incision is used for rug mounts and for a variety of poses. The areas to be cut are shown in Figure 1. Make the slits (cutting the feet free from the carcass) and pull the skin off the carcass. The head is attached as with the shoulder mount.



The Dorsal Method

The dorsal method of skinning involves a long slit down the back (from the tail base up into the neck). The carcass is skinned as it is pulled through this incision. The feet/hooves and the head are cut off from the carcass as with a shoulder mount explained later. Only use this method with approval and detailed instructions from your taxidermist. Use this method only when the skin can be frozen quickly after skinning.

Caping for a Shoulder Mount

1. With a sharp knife slit the hide circling the body behind the shoulder at approximately the mid-way point of the rib cage behind the front legs. Slit the skin around the legs just above the knees. An additional slit will be needed from the back of the leg and joining the body cut behind the legs (figure 2A and 2B).

2. Peel the skin forward up to the ears and jaw exposing the head/neck Junction. Cut into the neck approximately three inches down from this Junction. Circle the neck cutting down to the spinal column. After this incision is complete, grasp the antler bases and twist the head off the neck. This should allow the hide to be rolled up and put in a freezer until transported to the taxidermist. These cuts should allow ample hide for the taxidermist to work with in mounting. Remember, the taxidermist can cut off excess hide but cannot add what he does not have.

Note: In field dressing a trophy to be mounted, don't cut into the brisket, chest, or neck area. If blood gets onto the hide to be mounted, wash it off with snow or water as soon as possible. Also, avoid dragging the animal out of the woods with a rope. Place it on a sled, rickshaw, or 4-wheeler. The rope, rocks, or broken branches from dead surrounding trees can easily damage the fur or punctured the hide. If you need to drag out the rope, attach the rope to the base of the antlers and drag out your trophy very carefully.

