

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS  
AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE OF TEXAS AND UNITED  
STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING

Extension Service  
County Agent Work

TANNING LEATHER

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The tanning of leather at home is one of the most profitable activities that can be practiced. It is profitable from three standpoints.

1. It will insure the individual an adequate supply of much needed leather and permit him to maintain his harness and equipment in good shape.
2. It permits the individual to convert low priced hides into a high priced material. Thus, it will make available for the home the difference for extra and needed conveniences.
3. It will serve to lengthen the number of days of farm labor. The time of farm labor is at present largely used for producing the absolute necessities and requirements for maintenance. If we can add a few days to productive effort, the additional days of labor will result in profit.

To create interest and extend the knowledge of tanning methods, it is suggested that community tanning demonstration schools be held during the slack seasons of the year.

Suggested Plan for Running a Tanning School

See Extension Bulletin 86 - "Home Tanning."

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The best method of learning how to tan leather is to see all stages of the tanning operation and actually handle each stage. To permit this it will be necessary either to have those interested visit the demonstration daily for several days or to have hides in each of the several stages. The latter is the better method for a school, thus using only one day for the demonstration of the actual tanning operations. A second day can be utilized very profitably for demonstrating the making of different articles from the finished leather. In this connection, the operator should read Extension Bulletin 86 - "Home Tanning" - before beginning to prepare the hides for the demonstration.

However, should it not be possible or feasible to have each stage of the tanning operation going on, it is better to have the finished leather available for those attending to handle and work with. In this case, simple harness may be made to demonstrate the type of equipment necessary for farm leather work.

If only two hides can be prepared, it is better to have one finished and the other one ready to dehair in order that those attending the demonstration can see the ease with which the most disagreeable part of the tanning operation may be handled. The more nearly all stages in tanning are in progress for the demonstration, the more successful will be the school. If one man does not care to handle all phases of the demonstration, it is suggested that several in the neighborhood can cooperate in this school, each preparing a hide for a different stage, and on the day of the demonstration bringing it in the barrel with the solution of the previous day to the demonstration.

Generally, men will be more interested in harness leathers. Boys will be most interested in furs made from opossum, coon, and other small skins.

Therefore, to have this type of school, light skins should be included. Sheep or goat skin after shearing, and it is better to shear or clip before dehairing to save the wool or hair, may be dehaired and delimed as in the case of cowhides, then tanned with the same preparation as in the case of furs. These thin leathers can be used in purse making, etc.

In addition to thin or light leathers, boys also like leathers for making halters, bridles, etc., hence one hide weighing 25 to 30 pounds should be completed for them by chrome process.

To demonstrate the making of farm harness and show the necessary equipment for such work, it is suggested that things be made that have vital use, - such as hame straps, mule halters, cow halters, back bands, riding bridles, bridle reins and wagon lines. These are rapidly made and will work easily into a demonstration.

If care is taken to follow the directions in Extension Bulletin 86, "Home Tanning" excellent leather will be obtained and as a result of such a demonstration many should be inspired to do likewise and the farm leather and equipment situation should be much improved.

(Failure is the result of failing to read B-86 - "Home Tanning", Texas Extension Service, A. & M. College, Texas, and should not occur.)