

## How to Tan Skins

Initially, salting skins in the field is okay, but it's not a good idea to freeze the skins with salt on them. Salt seems to inhibit the freezing process and they may not freeze properly. Also, skins may go rotten in the freezer if the salt is not removed. Also be sure to remove the tail bones if you intend to freeze the hide.

If the skin has been frozen, soak the skin in cold salty water (200gr of salt to 10L water) until totally thawed out, saturated and rehydrated. Usually 24 hours is sufficient. If the skin has been salted, use the same procedure as above and wash out as much salt as you can. Rinse 2 to 3 times in cold water to remove any blood, dirt etc. Spin Dry in the washing machine when the wife is out. Lay flat and tack out on a flat board. Remove any flesh and sinew with fleshing tool. Skin must be as clean as possible.

Fill a container with warmish water (not hot) and a teaspoon or two of detergent. Wash the skin and agitate it to remove any remaining fat. Rinse the skin 2 to 3 times to remove all detergent and then spin dry in the washing machine.

Mix curing solution as per chart below.

Place skin in the solution for at least 7 to 10 days, depending on the size of the skin. Small skins take 4-5 days. Put the skins under the solution one at a time and squeeze them to eliminate air pockets. Remove the skins from the bath daily, agitate the solution and then replace them back into the solution. Make sure the solution is penetrating the whole skin, even the folds. On the second day you can check for patches of flesh membrane that might need scoring. These will be meaty patches of darker blue. Fatty patches will be white in colour. Scrape off these patches with a small tanning knife. Then put the skins back into the solution as described above.

After the skin has been in the solution for the required time, remove it and look to see that it has a blue-ish colour with no white patches. You can also nick the leather with a knife on a thick outside edge and check to make sure the tanning solution has penetrated the leather the whole way.

Wash in cold water 3 to 4 times until the water is clear. Spin dry in washing machine. Lay the skin flat on a board. Stretch and tack down. Using a paint brush, paint the leather lube all over the skin. Don't skimp on the lube, make sure the skin is well coated. If you don't use enough the skin will turn out stiff like cardboard. If the leather lube pools, smooth it out with the paint brush. Wash the brush out in cold water. Leave the skin for 7 to 10 days. The skin should have a purplish colour when it is cured.

Tacks can be removed on the 3rd or 4th day. After a week, use the fleshing tool provided to scrape the skin. Scrape the skin every day until it is dry and has turned grey. Before the skin dries completely, gently stretch it from corner to corner to soften the leather.

When finished, use an orbital sander or angle grinder sanding disc to smooth the under-skin surface.

Measurements									
Skin Weight Kgs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Litres of Water	5.83	11.66	17.49	23.32	29.15	35.00	40.83	46.66	52.59
Salt	335g	670	1kg	1335	1670	2kg	2335	2670	3kg
Solution	85ml	170	255	340	425	500ml	585	670	755
Skin Weight Kgs.	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Litres of Water	58.32	64.15	70.00	75.83	81.66	87.49	93.32	99.15	105
Salt	3335	3670	4kg	4335	4670	5kg	5335	5670	6kg
Solution	840	925	1L	1085	1170	1255	1340	1425	1.5