

Field care tips.

- Do not wash the skin. Moisture and heat creates a haven for the already present bacteria.
- Don't cart your animal around for hours before skinning. Skin the animal as soon as possible. Capes can be opened up to cool some.
- Always work with your blade facing up and skin down a neck-- not up!
- If you are capping to whole head remember to split the lips & nostrils and turn the ears. Eyelids should also be split on bigger game. Otherwise — freeze as is.
- You can use any fine grained salt. **No pool** or rock salt.
- Rub the salt in well with the palm of your hand. Get it into every crease, you cant use too much. Change the salt every 24 hours until the cape no longer drains.
- Boars should have their fatty shields cut off but if you cant for some reason, they must be chequered like a mango half so the salt can penetrate. Sambar necks too.
- Capes should not be transported inside plastic bags. They will sweat and rot.
- Capes being frozen should be folded like a towel, **not** rolled up. If the cape was salted prior, it **must** have finished draining. Knock **any** remaining salt off.
- Salted capes need not be frozen, they can be kept in a hessian bag in a cool dark place away from rodents.
- Fully skun & salted capes can be posted after draining and drying. (wrapped in butchers paper & placed into a cardboard box)
- Call your taxidermist if you are going to arrive late or you have posted an item.
- Accept that poor field care will result in refusal or retainment of any deposit paid.

A bit about me.

I have been practicing the art of taxidermy since 1996, with mammals my main interest.

Being a keen hunter and general animal observer I am very familiar with animal behaviour and posture of both Australian game and International game.

Custom mounts are a specialty so if your after a mount that is unique I can help you achieve the look you wish to capture..

Pets are considered but often refused.

I will cape your trophy fee of charge.

If you would like to learn how to cape your animal I am only too happy to show you.



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Animals are individuals.



Caping for a shoulder mount & field care tips.

I hope these instructions will enable you to enjoy your hunting trip without having the unnecessary worry of freezing capes.

Learning to cape out an animal isn't as hard as it might appear.

Remember most 'accidents' can be repaired but nothing can be done to reverse poor field care.

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This method is used for horned or antlered animals though it is basically the exact procedure for other animals without them. Simply disregard the 'v' cut instruction for the horns or antlers and do not cut the animal down the back of the neck unless necessary.

To begin, the skin surrounding the girth of the abdomen area is cut through, encircling the animal. I recommend to clients that they skin to as far back as the last third of the animals back, (mid to last rib), insuring plenty of hide. This is extremely important in floor and wall pedestal mounts. Better to have too much than not enough. A cut is then made from about the middle of the skull on an angle to meet with the base of horn/antler. This step is repeated from the same starting point to the other horn/antler, resulting in a V shape cut. Note: It is best if these initial cuts are made with the edge of the blade facing up, away from the hairs. In this way there is less chance of actually slicing through any of the hairs. A long opening incision is then made from the bottom of that V, down the centre of the topside of the neck, and on past the shoulders and down the centre of the back to the girth cut.

Now you have a choice - Cut the front legs off at the knee and pull the leg skin over the stump or cut down the back of the leg to the armpit before angling in, (about 15 degree), to meet the girth cut. Personal choice here. Be careful, this is where most mistakes are made and the cape is cut too short. Tubing legs prevents accidents.

After all opening cuts are made, skin forward, up and over the shoulders and the neck. As the skin is pulled forward the white connective tissue is all that should be sliced through to remove the hide from the meat of the carcass. Skin up over the base of the ears by pulling the skin forward until the creamy-yellowish ear cartilage is seen. Always make sure the muscles of the ear bases, the ear butts, are cut through at their point of attachment right at the skull. You will cut a lot of meat off with them but this can be removed during rough fleshing. Never let the ears be cut further up the ear canal as this will result in a repair fee.

After freeing the ears from the skull, the skin must be carefully cut or peeled from around the antlers or horns. Be extra careful, hair can be cut, skin torn and it will be visible in the finished mount and, also, you can slip easily and cut yourself. Continue forward down the skull, being careful not to cut through the skin, especially around the eyes. This is an extremely hard area to repair without being visible. To preserve the eyelids intact, the free hand acts as a guide from the outside of the skin so that you feel that you are not cutting into the lids. Reverse the skin and from the outside put a forefinger under the rear edge of the eyelid and lift up then from the flesh side cut through this thin skin-tissue close to the bone, (it does not matter if you slice the eyeball), surrounding the eye until the forward corner of the eye is reached. Then cut 'on' the bone and continue to do so until the tear duct is free. Be very careful removing the glands in front of the eye in deer. Skin down the face until nearing the rear corners of the mouth. Again, from the outside, insert a finger in the corner of the mouth and pull up giving tension to the cheek muscles. Cut through the

cheek muscles about 1" - 2" back from the corner of the mouth then free the skin of the lower lip from the jaw by cutting close to the teeth. When you approach the soft nose cartilage, cut the nose here, straight down. This ensures plenty of nostril skin. Now free the upper lip, again, cutting close to the teeth.

A taxidermist can only work with what he or she gets and by doing the following you are insuring a good start. If the mount turns out second rate because of hair slip due to inadequate or lazy field care it is usually the taxidermist who is blamed and their reputation by word of mouth is improvised. As such, don't be surprised if a taxidermist examines and refuses to work on capes not properly cared for.

The ears must now be turned inside out creating a pocket. Use the thumbs, an antler tine or the back of a desert spoon to assist in this step. They must be worked to the tips and sides but great care must be taken not to break through the edges. Insert a spoon or your thumbs into the skin of the ear between the backside of the ear skin and the white cartilage and gently 'push' forward whilst holding the ear tight with your opposite hand. You will feel the two surfaces separating. Continue until the entire ear can be turned inside out, right to the edges. The actual ear cartilage remains attached to the ear for now. All remaining red meat is removed from the ear cartilages, leaving the full bowl (rounded base of ear cartilage) of the ears intact.

The lips are opened or split by holding the outer surfaces, the hair-side and the textured gum-side, between the thumb and forefinger while cutting on the flesh side with a knife so they will lay open, just as you would butterfly a prawn. Take extreme care to avoid cutting through the narrow lip walls.

Surplus fat, meat, leaves & dirt should be scraped from the skin for best results. The fatty shoulder shields on a pig, which can be up to 2" thick, can be removed or if not a checkerboard pattern of cuts must be made in the shields without cutting through the skin, (like you would cut a mango half), to allow the salt to penetrate. The same can be done to the thick neck areas on Sambar capes.

It is advisable to get the skin off and salted with the least possible delay if in extremely hot country and it is very wise to arrange to have some salt carried with you so as the trophy is skinned salt may be applied to the surface and continued frequently until the skin is completely removed. By the time the skin is off, the salt has started its valuable work and the safety of this trophy is assured. Salt also helps you get a grip on slippery, bloody skin. You don't have to wait until all the caping is finished before salting. Just remember that if you decide to salt a skin, it can't be frozen until its finished draining fully and excess salt has been knocked off.

Common table salt is the best thing to apply and there is no danger of using too much. Pool salt is too large a grain for salting skins properly. While skinning, or after skinning, the flesh side should not be allowed to become dry before salting, as it will not take in the salt and hairslip will result on the dried areas. The skin should be spread on the ground, flesh side up, preferably on a tarp, canvas or towel with the edges opened and stretched and then liberally sprinkled with salt. Pay

particular attention to the facial areas. The salt supply should always be kept dry. The drier it is the better it draws liquids from the skin. The salt should be well rubbed into every part of the skin with the flat of the hand and the skin folded flesh sides together and placed in a shady place on a slanting platform allowing the initial fluids to drain away. Not rolled up.

After eight to twelve hours, the skin can be unfolded, all the old salt scraped off, and a new dry layer of salt rubbed into all areas of the skin again. Be sure no wrinkles form in the skin that will not allow the salt to reach them. Salt must be in contact with all areas of the flesh-side of the skin. This can be followed up with an additional salting or two, until the skin is no longer weeping and still pliable enough so they can be folded and packed into a cardboard box for postage, transport or for freezing in an airtight bag.

For antlered animals: Cut the skullcap from the head using a hacksaw or similar. Use the eye socket as a point to aim for when cutting the cap. Make the first cut from top of skull down to the centre of the eye socket and the second cut from the back of the skull to the centre of the eye socket. Simmer the skullcap for ½ hour being careful not to immerse the actual antlers in the water or burn them if simmering over a campfire. Remove all meat still clinging.

Antlers in velvet: Must be frozen a.s.a.p or delivered to your taxidermist a.s.a.p. Do not touch the velvet with your hands. Velvet does slip just as hair/epidermis does and needs to be treated as quickly as possible. You can spray/inject with formaldehyde but this product is extremely dangerous - best left for the experts.

Horned animals:

Simmer skull cap and up to 2 inches of horn for 30 minutes then tap the simmered skullcap where it meets the horn lightly with a stick or simply twist and pull from cores. (Inserting a knife under the horn can help). Clean all membranes from within the horn and on the bony 'cores' and rinse with a little Pine-o-clean, Metho or Dettol. Replace horns on the cores to dry, as they will shrink if left off after heating.

Removal of the jaws (pig, fox, deer, cat or dingo):

To begin, cut from the top of the skull down past the last molar, thru both top and bottom jaws. The jaws are then simmered for 20 minutes to 45 minutes and any meat clinging to the bones removed. Don't simmer longer than is necessary as the tusks will be even harder to remove or may crack. Pull the tusks out while hot using a towel to hold. You will notice you have to push the top of the tusk back towards the imaginary ear while pulling up at the same time. When removing tusks and whets be careful not to damage them and clean them of inner nerve tissue. Do not clean the outside of the tusks.

Competition quality jaw sets are available for boar, fox, cat, dingo & deer and are preferred as they will not crack as the mount ages.

* A fee applies for caping.