

Field care tips:

- Do not wash or let the skin get wet. Moisture and heat creates a haven for the already present bacteria.
- Do not cart the dead animal around for hours before skinning. Skin the animal as soon as possible, open the cape up to allow the skin to cool.
- Always work with your blade facing up and skin down a neck, not up.
- Caping means removing all skin from the animal including the head. Ears must be turned and the lips must be split. On large game the eyelids must be split also. Otherwise, the whole head skin / animal must be frozen.
- You may use any fine salt. Do **NOT** use pool salt. The grains are too large.
- Rub the salt into the skin with the palm of your hand. You can't use too much. Change salt every 24 hours, or until skin stops weeping.
- Boars need the thick shield removed. If you cannot, you must check them as you would a mango to let the salt penetrate the skin.
- Never transport skins in plastic bags. They will sweat and rot.
- Capes to be frozen should be folded like a towel, not rolled up for even thawing. If the cape was salted prior, all salt must be removed / knocked off, as salt hinders freezing.
- Salted and dried capes need not be frozen, but stored in hessian bags or cardboard boxes away from rodents.
- Fully caped, salted and dried skins can be sent via mail to a tanner or taxidermist. Let your taxidermist know if you have posted an item.
- Do not expect your taxidermist to be willing to receive an item late at night, especially on a weekend. Think ahead.
- Do not expect the poor field care will result in refusal or retainment of any deposit paid.

* [Personal caping instruction available, fees apply.](#)

A bit about me.

I have been practicing the art of taxidermy since 1996. I taught myself, borrowing books from the local library. I still have the 1st taxidermy book I bought.

In 2001 I travelled to New Zealand to train with a friend and in 2009 I travelled to St Louis in the United States to compete in the world taxidermy championships. I am happy to say I received a 2nd place score with my first attempt at an exotic species, a coyote pedestal mount. Whether you're after a standard shoulder mount or a fully customised piece, I can create a unique mount for you.



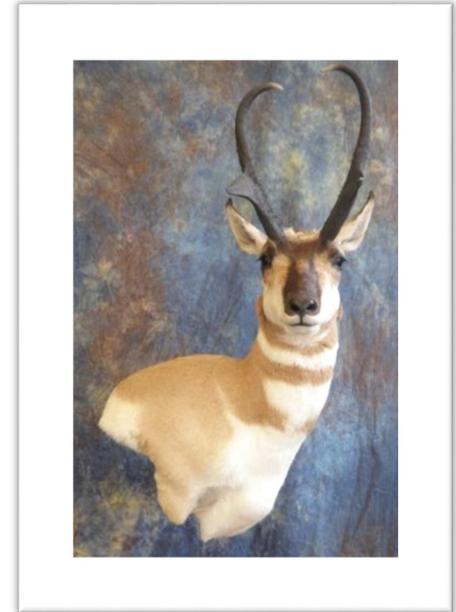
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Caping for a shoulder mount & field care

I hope these instructions will enable you to enjoy your hunting trip without having to worry about keeping skins cool or freezing capes.

Learning to cape out an animal is not as hard as you might think and it will save you money at the taxidermist too.

Just remember, take your time, use sharp blades and that while most accidents can be repaired, nothing can repair poor field care.

Caping Instruction:

To begin the skin surrounding the girth of the abdomen is cut through. I recommend making this cut as far back as the last rib to ensure plenty of skin.

A cut is then made from the middle of the skull, down along the spine to the girth cut. A small cut is made from each antler/horn to the cut in the middle of the skull resulting in a V shape. You can also cut straight across from burr to burr if preferred.

Remember to have the blade facing up, it will cut the hairs if facing down.

Next I find it easiest to 'sock' the front legs. That is, make a cut around the front legs and peel the skin off while pulling the leg out. This ensures the armpits and brisket are not cut the wrong way.

After all opening cuts are made skin forward, up and over the shoulders and neck. As the skin is pulled away from the carcass, all you are really cutting through is the white membrane connecting skin to body.

Skin up to the base of the ears and cut through the flesh ensuring your cut is deep enough so as not to cut the ear canals off too short. Excess meat can be trimmed away later on before salting..

After freeing the ears from the skull the skin must be carefully peeled from the base of the antlers or horn. Sometimes a screwdriver can help in 'pushing' the skin off, however be careful. Continue down the skull to the back of the eyes.

With your free hand, insert a finger into the eye socket and pull the skin taught, enabling you to cut along the bone of the eye socket, through the creamy coloured eyelid skin, releasing the skin from the eye socket. Carefully pry the gland free from the socket here in front of the eye. (deer).

Continue down the face to the bridge of the nose.

Skin down the cheeks and again with your free hand pulling the skin taught, cut through the side of the mouth so you can see the back molars in the jaw. Then, following the gum line release the bottom lip.

Do the same on the top lip, however when you approach the nostril area, cut through the cartilage, ensuring plenty of inner nostril skin.

Now that the skin is free from the skull and body the ears must be turned inside out creating a pocket. Using the thumbs, an antler tine or the back of a spoon, your aiming to separate the inner ear skin from the hard cartilage. As your working, you will feel or hear the skin separating. The ears must be worked to the tips or as close as possible before salting. If you are not confident the skin must be frozen at this point. Any remaining red flesh is trimmed away.

The lips are opened or split in the same manner as you would butterfly a prawn. Begin on the inside of the lip and cut to the inner edge. This allows salt in to preserve the skin.

Surplus meat and membrane are now removed from the skin. All leave, dirt, stomach contents and any faeces removed. The fatty shields on boars removed or slit as previously mentioned to allow salt in.

Common table salt is the best thing to use. Don't use large grain salt such as pool salt and don't freeze a cape with salt on it—it won't fully freeze.

Place a mound of salt on the face and rub the salt into the skin creases ensuring the ears, eyes and mouth is well covered. Continue with the rest of the skin. When you have the skin covered, lay the skin together, flesh to flesh, right side out and lay the cape on a slanted board if possible to drain. A fence will do if no animals can get at the skin.

All fluids need to be able to drain away from the skin. Placing the skin in a hessian bag is not ideal as the fluid will just pool within the skin.

Let the skin drain for at least 24 hours then apply fresh salt every 24 hours or until the skin stops weeping. When the weeping stops the skin can be hung from a hook to dry and as it dries, it can be folded up like a towel, not rolled up.

When totally dry the skin can be posted to a tanner or taxidermist or stored in a cool dry spot until needed. It can also be frozen but this is not necessary.

Antlered animals:

Cut the skull cap using the eye socket as a point to aim for. Cut from the bridge of the nose to the eye socket and from the eye socket to the back of the skull. Simmer the skull cap for about 30 minutes, just enough to heat them and remove and gelatinous material.

Horned animals:

The skull cap needs to be simmered, usually 20 minutes is long enough, and the horns need to be 'popped' off the bony inner cores. Running a blade under the horn at the base may help water penetrate. When ready the horns are twisted with a pulling up motion following the natural curve of the horn. Do not boil horns as a ring of grease will be cooked into the horn.

Antlers in velvet:

These need to be frozen asap or treated asap. Heat from hands is enough to begin the rotting process. Prick a hole with a nail or blade in the tip of the antler and then inject saline solution into the large vein at the base of the antlers, flushing all blood through the vein and out the hole pricked into the tip of the antler. When the solution runs clear, a preservative must be injected before the velvet dries.

Boar jaws and tusks:

Boar jaws required for taxidermy can be simply cut straight down from the top of the skull to the bottom of the jaw behind the last molars. Simmer only long enough to remove any meat or gelatinous material. Any tusks or whets that come away may be packed with tissue for transport.

*Fee's apply for caping.
Hopefully this guide will help you avoid those fee's.