

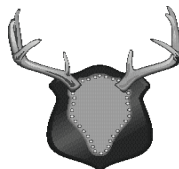
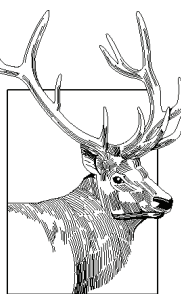
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Handle mount with special care for good trophy

By Pat Schiefen

*The Goodland Star-News
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Before a hunter goes out, he needs to think about whether he is going to have his trophy preserved with a mount. To end up with a good mount, area taxidermists say, a hunter needs to know how to handle the animal after the kill.

"The memory is the important thing," said Bob Juleson of Bob's Wildlife Taxidermy of Goodland. "It doesn't have to have big antlers or any antlers to be mounted. A hunt is what you make it."

If the hunter has the slightest plans of having his prize mounted, Juleson said, he needs to ask the taxidermist he is going to use how to field dress the animal for the best mount. Another thing to think about is where the hunter is going to hang his trophy. Sometimes hunters have something mounted without the slightest idea where they are going to put it, he said.

Before taking an animal to any taxidermist, he said, a hunter should do his homework, Juleson said. The hunter should ask for references, if the taxidermist continues his education, goes to state competition and can show you photos of his finished work. Kansas does not license taxidermists. In some states, like Pennsylvania, to be licensed a person has to take a written exam and oral exam and do an animal for the examiners.

Juleson said he got his schooling and certification through the Colorado School of Taxidermy of Cañon City.

He said if a hunter wants to bring him a freshly killed animal, the best time is as soon as possible. Internal organs should be removed. Juleson said he has things set up so he can skin an animal in about 10 minutes. The hide is skinned off the back leg and the skin pulled off.

Taking your trophy around to show it off to your friends in warm weather is really not a good idea, he said. It is surprising how fast a hide can go bad. When a hide goes bad, the hair falls out in bunches. However all may not be lost, he said, because a taxidermist can use a replacement cape.

The next step in the process is to tan the hide. Juleson said he tans most of his own deer capes. To prepare the hide, all the fat, meat, cartilage and the white membrane between the meat and hide needs to be removed. He then puts the hide in a pressurized tanning drum that rotates

the hide in tanning solution. There are several different tanning solutions.

One of the old ways to tan was to use the brains, Juleson said. It took two to three animal brains for one hide. This was used mostly to make buckskin clothing. With brain disease showing up in deer populations, there could be a health risk to the tanner.

Tanning opens up the pores of the skin and replaces the organic oils with special synthetic leather oils. The hide remains flexible. If a person want the hide tanned for leather, Juleson said, he has a place in Texas to send them.

Juleson said when he started tanning, he used a trash can and moved the skins with a broom handle. He said by tanning his own hides, the turnaround time for the mount is a lot less.

Juleson uses a form he orders for the hide to go on. The forms are different sizes and he measures the animal to know which form to order. The antlers are attached to the form with a clay compound. Juleson said he goes in and routes out the nostrils so there is some depth to them.

A hunter needs to decide how he wants the animal to look, he said: which way the animal faces, the way the head is held and the position of the ears.

The ears of the deer need to look natural. Juleson said he can get ear forms, but forms for mule deer are different from those for whitetail.

Juleson has an antique form on his wall that is made out of cardboard, but, he said, forms now are made from a type of foam. He said the form companies have artists that sculpt the originals for the forms so they look lifelike.

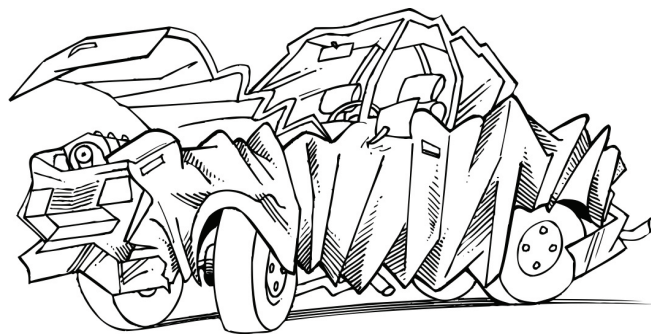
The next step is to slide the wet hide over the form, get it positioned right and then the hide is allowed to dry. The patterns that the hair makes if done right help the mount to look real. What also helps is having ducts at the inner corner of the eye positioned correctly and not stretched, and having the eyes with its lashes right.

After the mount is dried, he said, the final finishing touches are done. If antlers need to be repaired, Juleson can build one from clay or can use a replacement piece from another set of antlers. He colors the inside of the nostrils and anywhere that needs coloring.

Juleson said he can mount deer, snakes, antelope, elk, buffalo, moose, fish and birds. He said he does the trophy for the coyote calling contest in St. Francis.

"Each animal has its own beauty," he said.

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