Chapter 17

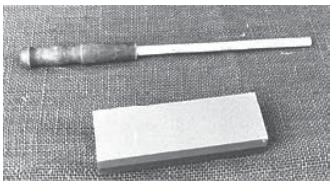
Handling Fur

Content Standard - *Students demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge, skills, and equipment needed to safely skin animals and prepare the pelts for market*

Ohio DOW Photos

Fur Handling Tools
Comb, Brush, & Fork.

Knives.



Knife Sharpeners.

Introduction

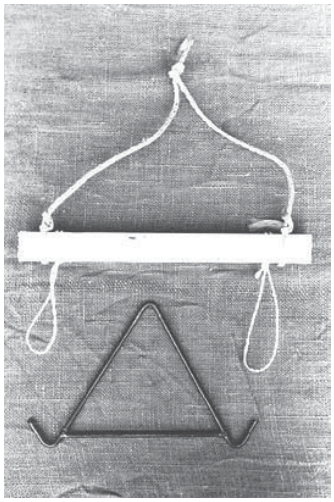
Proper fur handling is the key to getting a good price for the furbearers you worked so hard to trap. Furbearer carcasses can spoil quickly, especially in warm weather. If you don't know how to skin and prepare pelts you may want to consider selling your furs unskinned on the carcass. To avoid spoilage, a good rule of thumb is to sell unskinned animals daily if the outside temperature is above 40 degrees, every two or three days if below 40 degrees. Selling your pelts on the carcass is less work for you and more work for the buyer. You will receive a lower price for unskinned furs. If you do decide to skin your own catch, proper fur handling begins at the trap site.

If a furbearer is trapped in water, it should be removed from the trap and rinsed clean of any dirt, mud, or vegetation. Shake excess water from the animal, and stroke it from head to tail with your hand to remove as much water as possible. If dry snow is available, the animal can be rolled in it to absorb water. If it is below freezing, don't lay a wet animal on ice or a metal surface. The guard hairs of the pelt will freeze to ice or metal, damaging the pelt when you pick it up. If an animal's fur is still wet when you get home, hang it up by the head or forelegs in a cool place to dry. Circulating air with a fan will decrease drying time. Generally, pelts should be dry before being skinned and placed on a stretching frame.

If a furbearer is trapped on land and is already dry, simply brush or comb the pelt to remove any burrs or dirt. Land furbearers may have external parasites such as fleas, ticks, or mites, so keep the carcasses in a place where they won't contaminate your house, clothing, or vehicle. A good way to rid a carcass of external parasites is to place the animal in a plastic bag and spray a small amount of insecticide in the bag with the carcass. Seal the bag for approximately 30 minutes and air the carcass out before skinning.

Explain the importance of wearing latex gloves when processing furbearers

Furbearers should be skinned as soon as possible after they are trapped. The pelt is easier to remove and less likely to be damaged when the animal is fresh. Before skinning, remember to put on a pair of latex gloves. The gloves will help protect you from any diseases the animal might be carrying.



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Gambrels.

Explain the terms "cased furs" and "open furs"

Pelts are prepared for the fur market by skinning in one of two ways: cased or open. Except for beaver and sometimes badger, all furbearers should be skinned cased.

Case skinning is much like removing a sweater or sweatshirt by grasping the bottom and turning it inside out as you pull it up over your head. To do this with a furbearer pelt, make a cut from the top of the foot pad along the inside of one back leg to the top of the foot pad of the other back leg. Then simply remove the pelt from the carcass by turning it inside out, skinning down over the back legs, forelegs, and head.

To skin a beaver or badger using the open method, make a cut on the underside of the animal from its chin to the base of its tail. Removing the fur this way is much the same as you would take off a coat.

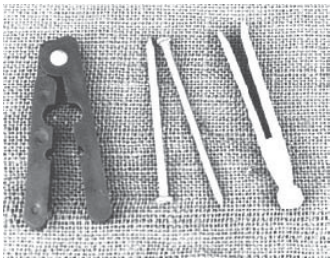
Explain the terms "market fur in" and "market fur out"

Fur buyers want cased-skinned, dried furs presented to them either "fur in" or "fur out," depending upon the furbearer species. "Fur in" means that the fur side of the pelt is on the inside when the pelt is sold. "Fur out" is just the opposite; the fur should be on the outside of the pelt, the skin on the inside. Check with your local fur buyer to see how he wants each species of furbearer pelt prepared for market.

Most fur buyers are glad to explain proper fur handling techniques and preparation to you because it means more profit for both of you. Don't be afraid to ask.

Raccoon - cased pelt, fur in.

Tailbone Pullers



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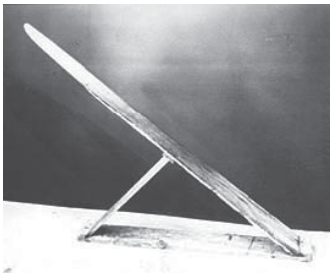
Commercial model, nails, clothespins.

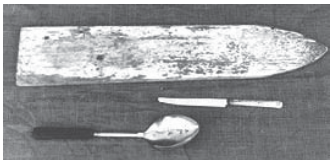
Tail Slitting Tools

Top - Slitting Knife
Bottom -Metal Guide.



Fleshing Board.

Muskrat Tools



Muskrats do not have a lot of fat. They can be pulled over a scraping board and fleshed with a butter knife or a spoon.

Explain why the tails of some furbearers are split and left on the pelt while the tails of others are removed

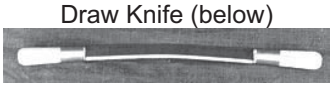
Furbearers with furred tails should have their tails split from the underside with a knife and the tail bone removed. A tail-stripper comes in handy for this purpose. The de-boned, furred tail should remain attached to the pelt. Tails of furbearers that are not furred should be cut from the pelt at the hairline during skinning and discarded.

Know the purpose of a fleshing board and fleshing tools

Once you've skinned a furbearer the next step is fleshing. A fleshing board is a narrow wooden or fiberglass beam that holds a pelt when removing meat or fat still on the skin. If not removed, this meat or fat could rot and spoil the pelt.

Once pulled onto a fleshing beam (skin side out), the pelt is scraped with a double-handled draw knife, a single-handled scraper, or other type of fleshing tool. A fleshing tool can be as simple as an old butter knife for many small furbearers.

Draw Knife (below)



Spoon Scraper (right)

Describe the proper use of wire and wooden stretchers

The final step in preparing furs for market is to place the skinned, fleshed pelt on a wire or wooden stretcher. The term "stretching" may be a little misleading, as the pelt is not being stretched at this point in the process. Rather, it is simply being held in place as it dries so that it does not shrink or shrivel. Most cased-skinned furs should first be placed over a stretching board or wire frame fur-side in. Remember to center the pelt on the board or frame, meaning that the forelegs and belly of the pelt should be on one side of the frame and the eye holes, ears, and back should be on the other side. Pull the pelt snug, but not too tight. If you are using a wooden stretching board

secure the pelt in place with a few tacks or push pins near the base of the tail and back legs. Wire frames usually have two metal arms with prongs that hold the base of the pelt taut.

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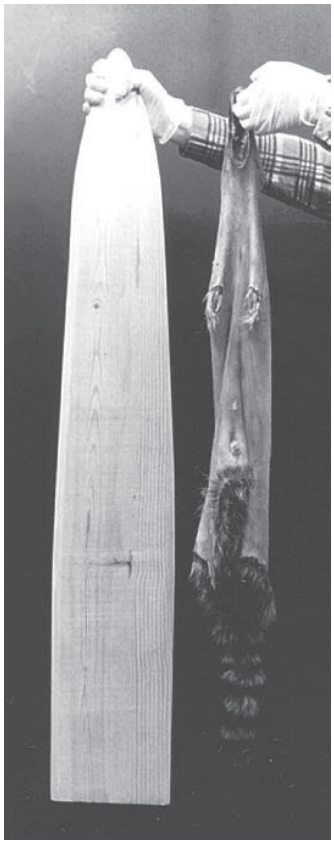
Beaver skinned open.

Explain the process of drying pelts and why it is important

Once a pelt has been properly placed on a stretching board or wire frame it should be hung up and dried slowly in a room with a temperature of about 55 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Use a fan to circulate air throughout the room to decrease drying time. Pelts of foxes, bobcats, fishers, marten, weasels, and coyotes should be turned fur side out.

You must check the pelts as they dry fur side in. Once the skin is dry to the touch, remove the fur from the stretcher and turn it fur side out. Place the pelt back on the stretcher fur side out and pin it in place to finish drying. The skin may be dry to the touch in as little as one hour for weasels, to as long as 10 hours for coyotes.

Complete drying of a pelt may take anywhere from just a few days to a week or more depending upon the temperature and air flow. Regardless of how long it takes, a pelt should be completely dry before removing it from the stretching board or wire frame. If not, the pelt could rot, and all the effort you put into catching, skinning, fleshing, and drying the fur will be lost.



Wooden Stretcher.

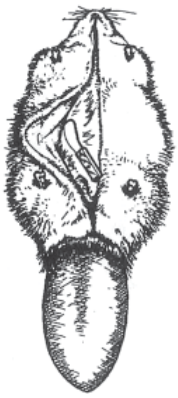
Explain the process for freezing pelts

An alternative to fleshing and stretching pelts immediately after skinning is to quick-freeze them. Care must be taken if you choose this method or the pelts could be ruined. Always freeze the pelt-fur-side out, with no exposed flesh by rolling furs, and freezing each individual pelt in a plastic bag with as much air removed as possible. Because of the insulating properties of the fur, freezing them individually ensures the pelts are properly cooled in the freezing process. Freezing should not be considered for long-term storage of your pelts because they will dry out; this process is also called "freezer burn," and will damage the pelt over time. To reduce moisture, remove the pelt from the bag prior to thawing. Never allow frozen green pelts to thaw for so long that the grease melts, or the skin gets slimy making the job of fleshing difficult. However, attempting to flesh a partially frozen pelt may cause you to inadvertently damage the pelt.

Turning a Canine Pelt.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Starting cut for open skinned beaver.



Open skinning beaver.

Beaver on Board

Small furbearers such as mink and muskrat can be frozen whole, without skinning. Allow whole frozen animals to partially thaw before selling. In the case of selling whole frozen muskrats, only the feet need to be thawed when presenting to the buyer.

Individual furbuyers may have different instructions for freezing pelts or whole animals. If you know where you intend to sell your fur, check with the buyer for more specific directions on freezing fur.

Some furbearers may be sold whole to someone in the taxidermy field. This however, can be a very limited market and taxidermists will likely be looking for only certain species in prime condition. Before freezing your animals whole, you should contact your local taxidermist to determine their level of interest.

Take health precautions while skinning

Some furbearers carry diseases and parasites that can be passed on to humans during the skinning process. To avoid health threats, use band-aids to cover open cuts or sores on your hands before skinning wild animals. Wear latex gloves. Disposable latex gloves like the ones used by surgeons are available from pharmacies or trapping supply dealers. When finished skinning, wash your hands well with anti-bacterial soap. Don't handle soda cans or food during the skinning process – they can pass bacteria to your mouth.

Skinning

Skinning animals takes time, but it has some advantages. If you have limited freezer space, pelts take up less room than whole animals. Most dealers pay more (depending on the species) because it saves them the cost of having someone skin your catch. Meat from some furbearers can be used as bait, eaten or sold. You can use secondary markets for glands, skulls, teeth and claws.

You'll need some basic equipment for skinning. A sharp, high-quality knife is a must. Blades with pointed tips are best except when skinning beavers – rounded tips come in handy for this job.

There are two ways to skin furbearers: open or cased. The open method involves making a slit in the belly skin from the chin past the vent. The cased method involves making a cut from heel to heel and around both ankles, then pulling the hide over the animal's head like you would remove a tight glove or sweater.

Case-skinning muskrat

Muskrats are among the easiest furbearers to skin because the connective tissue that joins the pelt to the muscle is weak.

Some trappers prefer to hang the animal from a gambrel; others feel this is a wasted step. If you use a gambrel, poke the top of one hind foot through a hook. Grasp the tail and make a cut from the base of it (where the fur ends) to the heel of the hind foot that's held by the gambrel. The cutting edge of your knife should face upward and angle away from you, just under the skin. Repeat on the other side.

Make cuts around the ankles of both hind feet. Some people make cuts around the wrists of both front feet, but this isn't necessary. Make a cut completely around the base of the tail where the hair ends.

Work the skin free from the muscle tissue on one of the hind legs. After it's started, push your forefinger and index finger under the pelt toward the backbone, then upward under the tail, pulling the pelt free. Peel the skin away from the muscle all the way across the cut. Follow through with your thumb around the leg bone and start removing the pelt on the animal's belly side.

Pull the pelt downward toward the animal's head. It should come off freely until you get to the front legs. Pass a finger between an armpit and the pelt to loosen it then pull downward until the front leg comes free. Repeat this on the other side.

Grasping the pelt at the tail end, pull downward until it stops at the ears (you'll notice some whitish cartilage where the ears connect to the skull). Make small cuts to separate the bases of the ears from the skull. Pull downward until you get to the eyes. Use a knife to make small cuts that separate the eyelids at the skull (be sure to leave the eyelids on the pelt). Pull downward until the pelt is free, or make a small cut at the tip of the nose.

Case-skinning raccoon

Make cuts around both ankles and wrists. Some people prefer to cut both front feet off at the wrists with a hatchet. Next, make a cut from the inside of one heel to the other, passing below the vent. Grasp the end of the tail and split the underside toward the vent. If you have a tail stripper, you can start the cut about 4-6 inches from the base of the tail. Continue the cut along one side of the vent until it meets the cut that goes from heel to heel. Make a cut on the other side of the anus, forming a triangle around the vent.

Pelting a raccoon

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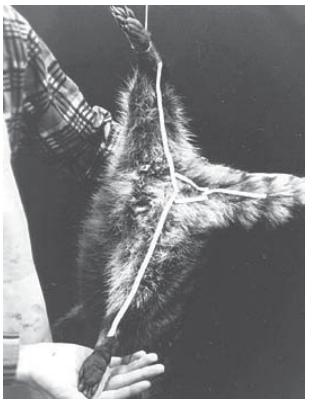
1. Brush and comb the fur.



2. Lines show where to cut.

3. Cut both legs from ankle to 1" below vent, then around the ankles.

Pelting a raccoon (con't)

4. Cut bottom side of tail. Start about 1/4 of the tail length down. Wear latex gloves when skinning. Keep your knife sharp.

5. Pull the pelt off the legs, down to the crotch. Work it loose with your fingers, then cut it away at the crotch.

6. Pull the pelt off the hips then pull it away from the back and part way down the tail.

Using your knife, separate the pelt from the muscle around both ankles. You'll need to loosen enough of the pelt to grab it. Pull downward with some force. This should separate the pelt along most of the leg. Repeat this procedure on the other side.

Work the pelt free near the base of the tail. If necessary, cut some of the connective tissue. Peel the pelt away from the tail bone for a distance of 3-4 inches. Place a tail stripper around the tail bone and yank downward with one hand while using your other hand for leverage against the lower back of the raccoon. If the tail bone doesn't pull out, extend your cut a few inches toward the tip of the tail and try again. Split the tail all the way to the tip after the bone is removed.

Tails remain attached to the pelts of raccoons, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, badgers, mink, weasels and skunks. After removing the bone, split the tail along its entire length. Using a guide can help you to make a straight cut.

Pull the base of the tail toward you and run your fist downward between the pelt and the muscle tissue along the backbone. Turn the animal around and loosen the pelt from the belly. If the raccoon is a male, the skin will stop at the tip of the penis; a small cut can be used to separate it from the pelt.

Run your fist downward between the pelt and the muscle tissue along the centerline of the belly. Pull the pelt downward, freeing the sides. It will stop at the front legs. Using a knife, make a slit through the connective tissue at the shoulder and upper arm. Be careful not to cut through the pelt itself.

Loosen the pelt near the armpit by pushing between the pelt and muscle tissue with your fingers. After it's started, cup your fingers from both hands through the opening and pull downward. This should separate the pelt to the wrist, where it will pull free. Repeat this procedure on the other side.

After both front legs are free, pull downward on the pelt. The pelt of young raccoons will usually separate to the base of the skull. The connective tissue on the necks of older raccoons is stronger. You'll probably need to use a knife in some places, but be careful – a light touch with a sharp blade will get the job done, especially if you're applying pressure to the pelt by pulling it downward.

Continue working the pelt downward until it stops at the cartilage that forms the bases of the ears. Cut through the cartilage at a point close to skull. When both ears are free, pull downward until you reach the eyes. Using a knife, separate them from the pelt by cutting carefully next to the skull. Pull downward again to the tip of the nose and make a small cut through the cartilage to free the pelt.

Open-skinning beaver

Make cuts as shown earlier in this manual. Be careful not to cut into the muscle tissue – insert your blade just beneath the skin with the cutting edge facing up and angled away from you. We recommend removing all four feet with a hatchet or heavy-duty knife.

Beavers have a thin layer of fat between the pelt and muscle tissue on the belly. Starting at the edge of the cut you made down the beaver's belly, use a round-tipped knife to separate the pelt and fat from the muscle tissue. Continue this process along the entire length of the beaver – take your time and angle your blade toward the muscle tissue to avoid slicing into the leather.

You'll encounter a thin layer of connective tissue about halfway between the center line of the belly and the legs. Cut through it, leaving the connective tissue attached to the pelt. Continue separating the pelt until you reach the armpit and groin area. Pull the pelt back to expose the layer of connective tissue around the legs. Slice through the tissue, then run a couple of fingers under it along the legs. You should be able to flip the pelt over the end of the bones where you cut off the feet.

Flip the beaver on its side and continue separating the pelt from the muscle tissue, working toward the backbone. You'll probably need to cut into the muscle tissue near the lower hip and tail, leaving some of it attached to the pelt. The middle part of the pelt will separate easily by pulling it back or running your hand between the pelt and muscle. Don't worry about skinning out the shoulders and neck at this point. Lay the beaver on its back and repeat these procedures on the other side.

After the pelt is loose on both sides, lay the beaver on its belly and flip the pelt over the beaver's head. This exposes the shoulders, which can be separated easily from the pelt. Continue working toward the head until you encounter the ear canals at the base of the skull – they are somewhat bony and connected by cartilage. Cut through the cartilage at the skull and continue skinning out the head. You'll need to make some cuts to separate the connective tissue around the eyes and another when you get to the tip of the nose.

Fleshing pelts

Fleshing removes fat and muscle tissue that can spoil and damage the pelt. Muskrats, mink, weasels, foxes, coyotes and bobcats are relatively easy to flesh. Raccoons, beavers, badgers and skunks are more difficult.

7. Remove tail bone with puller.

8. Once the tail is free, you can use the tail splitter, or the tip of a sharp knife to split open the tail.

9. Pull the pelt down to the animal's shoulders. Use a rag to get a good grip.

Pelting a raccoon (con't)

10. Work your fingers through the pelt at the armpit and pull the skin off the leg.

11. Pull the skin down to the ankle.

12. Pull the pelt down over the neck. Cut through the ear cartilage at the skull without cutting the fur.

Muskrats

For muskrats, you'll need a fleshing board and a scraper. You can make a fleshing board from a piece of 1 x 6-inch lumber. Cut it to the shape of a wire stretcher, but not as wide. Use a rasp to round the edges, and then sand them smooth.

Turn the pelt so that the leather side faces out and pull it over the rounded tip of the fleshing board. Rotate the pelt until the sides are on the flat working surfaces (one of the holes from a front leg should be on the front, the other on the back). Pull the pelt downward until it's snug.

Using a one-handled scraper, serving spoon or dull knife, remove any chunks of fat or muscle from the skirt (bottom) of the pelt. Next, remove any muscle tissue attached to the pelt near the cheeks. Well-fed muskrats have a fat deposit under each armpit. Remove these along with the reddish membrane that covers them.

Over-scraping is usually more of a problem than under-scraping with muskrats. If you apply too much pressure, you'll tear a hole in the pelt. Small specks of fat aren't a problem because they'll dry out when you put the pelt on a stretcher. It's the larger chunks and deposits under the armpits that need attention.

Mink and weasels

Place the pelt leather-side-out on a wooden stretcher. Use a narrow stretcher for females, which are smaller than males. Remove any muscle or chunks of fat along the skirt (bottom) of the pelt with a dull knife or one-handled scraper. Avoid getting fat or grease on the fur side of the pelt. If you do, rub the fur with sawdust to remove it.

Wild mink usually have a fat deposit under each armpit. Remove it along with the thin membrane that covers it. Be careful not to cut or rip the front legs.

You'll notice a thick red membrane across the lower back (below the shoulders). This is called a "saddle." Leave the saddle attached to the pelt unless it has a thick deposit of fat under it, which is rare with wild mink or weasels.

Foxes, coyotes, and bobcats

Remove all burrs by combing the fur. Nicking one with your fleshing knife while working on the leather side of the pelt can cause it to tear.

For the most part, foxes and coyotes require little fleshing. Remove any muscle tissue and chunks of fat. This is usually easier with a two-handled fleshing knife than a one-handled scraper. The cartilage at the bases of the ears should be cut off with a regular knife to avoid spoilage.

Raccoons, beavers, skunks and badgers

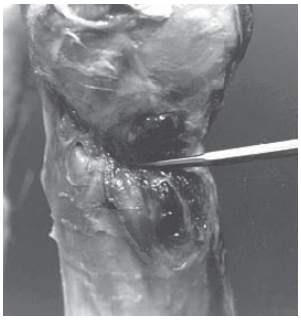
These pelts are the most difficult to flesh. The skin is covered by a thin layer of fatty material. This layer is covered by a membrane. You must remove both the membrane and the fatty layer for the skin to dry properly. We recommend spending time with a fur buyer or someone else with experience before trying to flesh these species yourself. You'll need a fleshing beam, plastic apron and two-handled fleshing knife.

The belly is the easiest place to start. Starting at the head, use the dull edge to remove the membrane and underlying fat. Work it off as far as you can reach comfortably then rotate the skin enough to work on the next section. Be careful around the front legs because you can cut or rip through creases or folds of loose skin.

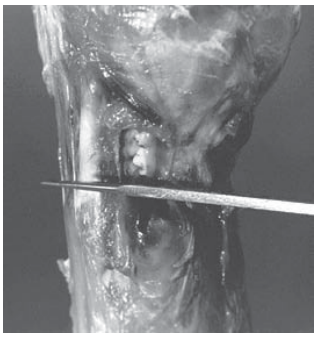
Starting behind the ears, use the sharp side of your knife to slice through the membrane on the neck. Let the blade of your fleshing knife ride under the membrane and push it away from you.

When the part of the pelt nearest you is fleshed all the way around, pull the pelt toward you and use your waist to pin it to the end of the fleshing beam. Continue fleshing all the way to the skirt (bottom) of the pelt. The edge of the skirt should be fleshed clean. The tail should be fleshed if it's fatty.

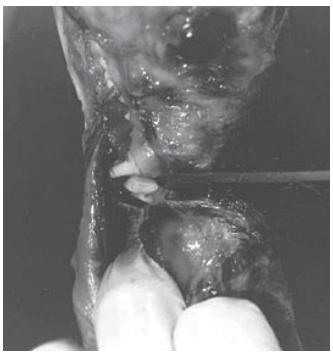
Fleshing beaver is similar except that most people prefer to start behind the ears and work all the way to the tail end of the pelt using the sharp edge of their fleshing knife. After a strip as wide as the shoulders is completed, rotate the pelt and work the fat and membrane off the sides with the dull edge of your fleshing knife. Be careful around the leg holes because it's easy to tear them.



13. Pull the pelt down to the eyes. Work your knife around the eyelids without cutting the fur.



14. Cut the pelt free at the jaw hinge, and then follow the lips without hitting the teeth. The teeth will dull your knife.



15. Cut through the bottom of the lip and free the pelt. You don't need to skin all the lower jaw. Cut lip half way up.

Stretching and drying

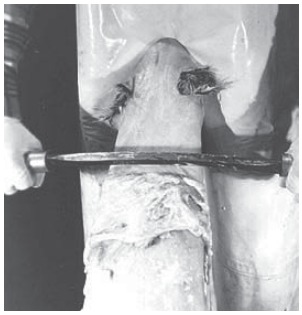
Muskrats

Most people prefer to use wire stretchers for muskrat pelts. Place the pelt on the stretcher with the fur side in. Adjust the pelt so that the eyes and ears are centered on one side and the front leg holes are centered on the other. Poke a small hole through the pelt at a point where the center of the tail would have been attached. Insert the middle tooth of one hook and pull it downward to remove any slack from the pelt. Attach the other hook to the belly with two teeth and remove any slack.

Hang stretchers from a rafter to keep them away from mice while drying. Temperatures between 40 and 60 degrees are best for drying pelts. Use a fan if the humidity is high.

Fleshing a raccoon

16. Raccoons have a lot of fat. Work the pelt over the fleshing beam. Put a rag over the nose of the pelt and press your stomach against the beam to hold the pelt. Start scraping just behind the ears, working down the pelt and away from your body using a pushing motion.



17. Pull the pelt up on the beam as you work further down the skin. This picture shows the fleshing knife working the raccoon's stomach area.

18. When you finish fleshing the body, do each leg and the tail. Be careful around the tail so you don't tear it off.

NOTE: Never try to make a pelt bigger than it is by "stretching" it. Pelts should be pulled tight enough to take the slack out of them – no more, no less.

Mink

Use wooden stretchers for mink. They come in two sizes. Narrow boards are used for females, which are usually smaller than males. Unusually small males can be put on a female board if the pelt looks too short and wide on a male board.

Place the pelt on the stretcher with the fur side in. Adjust the pelt so that the eyes and ears are centered on one side and the front leg holes are centered on the other. Grab the tail with one hand and use your other hand to stroke the pelt downward from head to tail. This removes slack without overstretching.

Pull up and out on the tail. This helps to move part of the underside to the back of the stretcher and creates an inspection window without cutting. Lay the tail back on the board. Pull down slightly if the pelt has any slack in it.

Tack the base of the tail to the board using an aluminum push pin. Bunch up the pelt on both sides of the push pin until the ends of the back legs come around to the same side of the board as the tail. Tack them at the edges of the board. Now tack the skin between the tail and the ends of the hind legs. It should be bunched slightly between each pin to make a pleat.

Spread the tail. Beginning at the butt end, push it upward toward the skirt in small increments. You want to make it short and wide instead of long and narrow. Pin the sides of the tail or place a piece of galvanized hardware cloth over the tail and pin it to the board.

Cut off the lower lip. Trim the front legs to about 3/4 inch in length and poke them back between the pelt and the board. Place a "belly board" (a narrow wooden wedge) between the board and the fur side of the pelt on the belly. The pelt will shrink as it dries. If you don't use a belly board, it can shrink so tightly to the board that it's difficult to remove when the time comes.

Raccoons

Use wooden or wire stretchers for raccoons. Wire stretchers are cheaper than wooden ones. They also save time because the pelt is attached by two hooks instead of tacked along the skirt. The advantage of wooden stretchers is that they give you more control over the shape of the pelt. This makes for more uniform pelts and, on average, higher prices in some markets.

When using a wire stretcher, squeeze the two sides together and slip the pelt over the top. Release the sides and square the pelt on the stretcher so that the eyes are centered on one side and the front legs are centered on the other. Pull the pelt down snugly and fasten a hook to the tail (about 2-3 inches below the base) using one or two teeth. Use the other hook to fasten the tips of the hind legs on the belly side. Pull down on both hooks to remove any slack from the pelt. Cut off the lower lip, and then trim the front legs to a length of about 3 inches.

Some people enlarge the inspection window on the belly by trimming away some of the pelt that bunches up in the groin area. This gives a neater appearance without hurting the pelt because the thin, kinky hair on the lower belly has no value.

When using a wooden stretcher, slip the pelt over the end and adjust it so that the eyes are centered on one side and the legs on the other. Pull downward gently to remove any slack from the pelt. Tack it at the base of the tail using an aluminum push pin. Bunch up the pelt on both sides of the push pin until the ends of the back legs come around to the same side of the board as the tail. Tack the ends at the edges of the board. Now tack the skin between the tail and the ends of the hind legs. It should be bunched slightly between each pin to make a pleat.

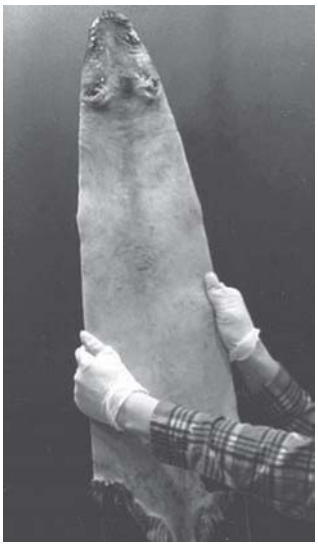
Spread the tail. Beginning at the butt end, push it upward toward the skirt in small increments. You want to make it short and wide instead of long and narrow. Place a piece of galvanized hardware cloth or cardboard over the tail to hold it in place, then pin the hardware cloth to the board.

Cut off the lower lip. Trim the front legs to about 3 inches in length. Place a "belly board" (a narrow wooden wedge) between the board and the fur side of the pelt on the belly. The pelt will shrink as it dries. If you don't use a belly board, it can shrink so tightly to the board that it's difficult to remove when the time comes.

Beavers

Beaver pelts are stretched open on a piece of plywood. The correct shape is oval. Ask a fur buyer or auction house for a pattern that can be traced directly onto your stretching boards.

Spread the pelt on the board, fur side down. Choose a pattern that best fits its size. As a rule of thumb, you'll lose three to four inches in length when you tack the sides. Tack the nose, butt and middle of both sides with 4d (4-penny finishing) nails. Next, tack the pelt between each of these nails. If the pelt seems too tight, pull the nails and begin again on the next smallest pattern.



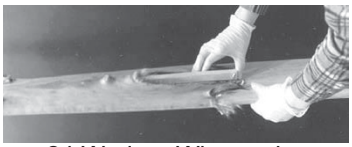
19. Slip the pelt over the wire stretcher and adjust it.

20. Hook the tail in place.

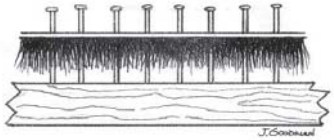
21. Hook the back legs.

22. Pull down on the edges of the pelt to stretch it to length. Do not pull hard on the hooks, or they may tear the pelt. Hang the stretched pelt up to dry. Under good conditions this will take four to seven days.

23. Tacking pelt - If using a wood stretcher.



24.Wedge -When using wooden stretchers use tacks to hold the tail and feet in place. Use a wedge between the belly and the board so that you will be able to remove the pelt when it dries and shrinks.



Lifting the beaver pelt will allow for faster drying

Explain the procedure for "boarding beavers"

Beavers and sometimes badgers are skinned open rather than cased. The pelt is then either tacked onto a plywood board, or sewn onto a wooden or metal hoop frame for drying. If tacked onto a plywood board (this should be done skin side up), use nails at least two inches long. Place the nails no more than one inch apart. The pelt should be shaped to form either a circle or oval. Once the pelt is tacked in place, raise it off the board up to the head of the nails in order to allow air circulation between the pelt and board. If sewing the beaver pelt onto a hoop, make your stitches about an inch apart. Regardless of whether you tack or sew, the four leg holes on the pelt should be closed, either by nails or stitching.

Note: Experienced beaver trappers sometimes skin a beaver partly open, and partly cased. This makes it easier to hold the beaver on a fleshing beam. After fleshing they finish cutting the belly so they can board the beaver.

Chapter 17 – Handling Fur

REVIEW

Content Standard - Students demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge, skills, and equipment needed to safely skin animals and prepare the pelts for market.

Explain the importance of wearing latex gloves when processing furbearers (page 137).

- Latex gloves will help protect you from animal _____.

Explain the terms "cased furs" and "open furs" (page 137).

- Except for beaver and badger, all furbearers should be skinned _____.

Explain the terms "market fur in" and "market fur out" (page 137).

- Fur-in means that the fur side of the pelt should be on the _____ when the case-skinned pelt is taken to market.

Explain why the tails of some furbearers are split and left on the pelt while the tails of others are removed (page 138).

- Furbearers with _____ tails should have their tails split and the _____ should be removed.

Know the purpose of a fleshing board and fleshing tools (page 138).

- Once you have skinned a furbearer, the next step is _____.

Describe the proper use of wire and wooden stretchers (page 138).

- A stretcher holds the pelt in place as it _____ so that it does not shrink or shrivel.

Explain the process of drying pelts and why it is important (page 139).

- If a pelt is not properly dried it can _____ and the value will be lost.

Explain the process for freezing pelts (pages 139-140).

Explain the procedure for "boarding beaver" (page 148).

- Beaver pelts are skinned open. The pelt is then _____ onto a plywood board or _____ onto a hoop frame for drying.