

When the hides are prepared, the containers of hides can be stored in a secure area, such as a CONEX container, discarded semi-truck trailer, shed, barn or just a fenced area if inside storage is not available. Once the hides have been transported to the designated state collection point(s), the Director of the National Veterans Service Commission, the Chairman of the Veterans Leather Program or one of the assigned Vice-Chairmen should then be notified, and they will arrange for the most cost-effective transportation to the tannery. Their telephone numbers are located in the Elks National Veterans Service Commission Manual, or in various other Grand Lodge publications.

The Elks National Veterans Service Commission will pay the expenses for the transporting of salted hides from the State collection point to the tanneries.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- No hides should be individually sent to the tanneries.
- No hides should be mailed "C.O.D." or by parcel post.
- Deposit hides at locally designated Lodge collection points as determined by your State Veterans Service Chairman or State Hides/Leather Chairman. The tanneries are not equipped to receive, sort, grade and account for small shipments from the Elks. Because tanneries are extending themselves above and beyond normal expectations, to assist in our committees' efforts to serve our most deserving veterans, it is in our best interest to meet their requirements.
- The National Leather Program Chairman will coordinate tannery activities.

LEATHER AND GLOVE PROCUREMENT

To procure fingerless gloves, a requisition (as shown in the *National Veterans Service Commission Manual*) must be submitted to the National Veterans Service Commission office in Chicago, by the Elk VAVS Representative or the Elk Representative at a State Veteran's Home. The Elk submitting the form must fill in their name and address, as the leather and gloves will be shipped to no other person. Leather cannot be shipped to post office boxes.

Leather craft kits from HHV and tanned leather can only be ordered by the Chief of Occupational or Recreational Therapy at the VA Medical Center, or the Supervisor State Veterans Homes.

All glove and leather requisition forms must be signed by the Chief of Occupational or Recreational Therapy at VA Medical Centers or the person who will supervise the program at State Veterans Homes.

Requests that are exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Director in Chicago.

It is the responsibility of the Elks receiving the leather and gloves to see that they are only used for their intended purpose. It is recommended that the gloves be presented to wheelchair-bound veterans by Elk Members to receive maximum effect for the veterans and our organization.

HELP HOSPITALIZED VETERANS LEATHER CRAFT KITS

Recently, many Veterans Medical Facilities decided that because of the danger involved, they would no longer allow hospitalized veterans to have sharp instruments in their possession. This required the occupational and recreational therapists, which were often in short supply, to cut the tanned leather into workable pieces for the veterans' projects. This created a decline in tanned leather being ordered through the Veterans Leather Program.

As a result, the Elks have formed a partnership with "Help Hospitalized Veterans" to have leather craft kits manufactured with our tanned leather and shipped to hospitalized veterans nationwide at no cost to our Order. Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV) is a non-profit organization located in Southern California, which was founded in 1970. They have provided countless numbers of various craft kits to our most deserving veterans. HHV is supported by donations and pledges from citizens across the nation who want to make a difference in hospitalized veterans lives.

The kits that are prepared with our donated leather are embossed with our Elks logo and contain literature about the Elks. Additionally, in each packaged kit is a pre-paid post card that the veteran is encouraged by the therapists to fill out and send to the Elks National Veterans Service Commission. Thousands of these heart-warming cards are on file at our Chicago office and are available for viewing.

These kits are automatically sent to the therapists in the various Veterans Medical Facilities to be distributed to the veterans, thereby saving the Elks VAVS personnel from being involved in the distribution of the craft kits.

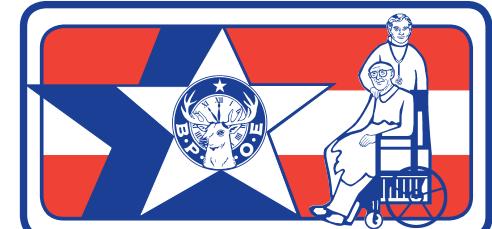
CLOSING

Our veterans responded willingly to our call, and now it is only fitting that we respond to their needs.



"Serving Our Nation's Veterans"

Elks National Veterans Service Commission



"Serving Our Nation's Veterans"

VETERANS LEATHER PROGRAM



PROGRAM, BACKGROUND, PURPOSE, AND INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE FOR PREPARING AND SHIPPING HIDES AND PROCURING TANNED LEATHER, CRAFT KITS, AND WHEELCHAIR GLOVES

INTRODUCTION

The Elks National Veterans Service Commission is the major source of hides and tanned leather used for recreational and occupational therapy throughout the Veterans Administration health care system. Elks Leather has become a national by-word among veteran patients everywhere.

Each year, through the dedication of our volunteers, the Elks donate tens of thousands of square feet of hides which are turned into a number of products. Gloves to protect the hands of wheelchair-bound Veterans, leather craft kits, and crafting leather are all part of the program whose aim is to improve the lives of our Veterans.

BACKGROUND

The Elks Leather Program was initiated in 1948 when the Elks of California launched a hide-gathering program in their State during hunting season. The raw hides were collected at central points, salted and shipped to a Los Angeles tannery for processing. Finished leather, in brilliant colors, was made available to Veterans Medical facilities throughout the State.

To make this popular program available to all VA Medical Centers (VAMC), the Elks National Veterans Service Commission arranged funding to pay for tanning and shipping of the hides nationwide. Today, many States already donate or are developing plans to support this program. All States are invited to donate hides, make use of the "*Gloves for Wheelchair Veterans*" Program, and participate in the tanned leather distribution.

Since the government does not budget money for leather for wheelchair gloves for veterans, it falls upon the Elks to keep the supply line open.

The Elks National Veterans Service Commission has pledged that: "*While there is a committee of Elks on the job, therapists will never experience a shortage of leather.*"

PURPOSE

In order to continue *Serving Our Nation's Veterans*, the donation of animal hides (*which are abundant and often disposed of in many States*) is an important part of the National Veterans Service Commission Leather Program.

Proper preparation of hides prior to shipment to the designated tannery is extremely important. Spoiled hides which are shipped to tanneries, must be discarded. This inflates the freight charges and causes unnecessary wasteful expenses.

PROCEDURES

This pamphlet explains in detail proper procedures for processing and preparing salted hides for shipment to the tanneries. Methods to obtain tanned leather and wheelchair gloves for patients are also explained.

PREPARING THE HIDES FOR SHIPMENT

Donated hides come from a variety of locations and individuals such as hunters, farmers, ranchers, slaughter houses, locker plants, taxidermists and highway departments to name just a few. The hides usually can be obtained for our Veteran Leather Program simply by asking, since many of these places will only dispose of them.

Hides arrive at individual Lodges in various conditions including salted, unsalted, frozen, dry, dirty and in a variety of containers such as boxes or plastic bags. Sometimes they are simply rolled and tied. If hides have already begun to spoil, they cannot be used. Good hides need to be immediately thawed, spread, cleaned and salted in the following manner:

The equipment and material required to prepare hides for storage and shipment are relatively inexpensive and if not already available, may be obtained from local businesses as donations. Otherwise, they may be purchased for a nominal amount.

Hides can be salted on the ground, a clean surface or you may want to use a locally manufactured table. These can be made of barrels or saw horses and plywood.

A container of fine table salt or livestock salt (*rock salt will not work*) will be needed. You will also need a sharp knife for removing excess fat, flesh, tails and tags.

"Kitty litter" or sawdust under the loaded pallets will absorb much of the remaining juices and odor. It will also be appreciated by the truck driver.

Clean-up around the salting area is fairly easy. Surgical rubber gloves and old clothing will keep this process safer and more sanitary.

If only a few hides are being prepared for shipment, plastic or cardboard barrels are acceptable. Palletizing of large quantities is preferred as it helps facilitate the quick loading of commercial trucks with the least amount of manpower. This also results in lower transportation costs.

Before being salted, the hide must be examined carefully to determine if it is still good. Spoiled hides can be identified by a peculiar odor, discoloration and if the hair begins to pull away from the hide easily. This means the hide is worthless and should be discarded.

Be very careful when processing hides. Avoid cutting even the smallest holes with the knife. All holes, bullets, arrows or just careless trimming will increase several times when the hides are processed at the tannery. Most tannery equipment stretches the hides and thereby increases the hole sizes. These holes can often change the quality hide into a barely usable one. A quality piece of leather will have very few holes, blemishes or scratches and can be used by the veterans for almost any type of project.

Before salting the hide, excess fat, flesh and the tail should be removed and discarded. Once this is done, fine table salt should be applied over all of the fleshy surface. A small animal will require four to five pounds of salt. A larger animal, such as a cow or an elk, might require as much as twelve pounds of salt. **REMEMBER!** **YOU CANNOT USE TOO MUCH SALT!**

After putting on rubber gloves, the salt should be thoroughly rubbed into all fleshy areas of the hide. Areas not salted will allow bacteria to develop and spread throughout the hide. The juices of the hide will mix with the salt and create a brine that will prevent bacteria growth.

After salting is completed, the edges of the hide should be folded in four to six inches to keep the moisture inside. This will keep the hides soft and pliable until they reach the tannery.

Processing hides that have been allowed to dry out is not cost-effective. They must be re-constituted in salt water, and then salted again before shipping. This is a labor-intensive and time-consuming process that should be avoided.

When hides have been salted and the edges rolled, there are a couple of ways that the hides can be stacked on pallets:

1. In colder climates, the hides, with the edges folded, can just be placed on the pallet, hair side down, one on top of the other.

2. In warmer climates, hides tend to spoil more rapidly. It is strongly recommended that these hides be again folded side to side and then placed on the pallet. This will help keep them in good condition until they reach the tannery.

Be sure to square up the pallet. This will facilitate the loading of the hides onto the commercial trucks with forklifts. Care should be taken to not overload the pallets to where the forklift cannot get under them or lift them.

Most commercial truck lines will require that the pallets be wrapped with shrink wrap.