



## SALTING GUIDE

**BUY YOUR SALT IN ADVANCE. FEED STORES STOCK IT IN 50LB BAGS. USE FINE NOT GRANULAR.**

Raw skins have a similar shelf life to offal, so it is very important that the skins are **salted as soon as possible after slaughter**, within hours. If not the fleece or hair will slip and the skin will begin to rot. Don't count on the abattoir to do it properly.

1.) **Somewhere under cover lay the skin hair side down on the brown side of a paper feed sac or cardboard.** The skin (not fleece or hair) should be white- any discoloration (orange, pink, yellow, purple or red) means that it is "off" and will NOT be able to be tanned, do not waste your time, dispose of it.

2.) **With a sharp knife or blade cut off any long frilly bits,** the small area at the neck if it is saturated in blood. Remove ears, feet, or tail if they have been left on. If it has been skinned in "sleeves" cut these open, so it can lay flat. **DO NOT SCRAPE THE HIDE.** Simply pull off any big fat chunks.

3.) **Liberally cover each skin in salt,** you cannot over salt a skin, take care to ensure that the edges are well covered and check that they are not rolled up. You are aiming for enough salt coverage that you cannot see the skin. Do not put the skins on anything metal as any rust stains will turn black in the tannin. (Watch for nails if putting on pallets!) Cover with another paper bag or some newspaper, this stops the salt drying out in hot weather or absorbing atmospheric moisture in damp conditions.

4.) **After 3 days shake off the salt and replace with a layer of fresh salt,** a skin is approx. 60% water and you need to draw a lot of this out. Leave skins flat to allow the salt to absorb the moisture and avoid placing in direct sunlight. Do NOT hang them up as the salt will slip off and skins must have salt on at all times, including during transportation.

\* A well-cured (salted) skin will feel firm but will remain flexible, and feel like dry cured bacon, do NOT let them dry out completely. (keep some paper over the top) **They will take 2-3 weeks to cure.**

5.) Once the skin is cured add fresh dry salt, (you don't need much but it needs to be fully covered) fold the sides of the skin into the middle, then roll tightly from the head end down and place into a paper feed sack or bag. A well-cured skin will keep for months, even years. **To mail** put each tightly rolled skin into layers of plastic and pack as many as possible into a stout cardboard box. **Include Name, Address, Phone, email, and details such as breed and age.**

# MAKING SURE YOUR SKINS CAN BE TANNED

*It is an irrefutable fact that EVERY sheep molts and it does not show on the animal.*

Please do not send skins to be tanned if they are past their "use by date" which is when the animal has started growing a new fleece under the old one. We cannot tan it.

FIRST RULE: Skins can only be tanned from animals slaughtered in the year that they were either born or shorn. Yes even lambs start molting in their first year and the timing depends on the breed...

- Jacobs start growing a new fleece by end of August to beginning of September.
- Most Down breeds should go by beginning of October to November to be safe, but you can check.
- The last are the Hill breeds and Primitives and they can be the end of November depending on the location.
- Gotlands can't work out when they are supposed to molt and there can be two or more breaks in lamb fleeces, which is why we struggle to do them. We do tan shearlings or older if the owner has checked for a break and they have been shorn that year.

December - It is too late! This also applies to shearlings and adults. All sheep molt once a year regardless.

TO CHECK FOR MOLT >>> Go to the base of the fleece and separate a few fibers. Hold tight next to the skin with one hand and pull with the other further up the staple. If the wool breaks and comes off in your hand it is too late. If we try, you will get a matted felted mess that you won't be happy to pay for. Remember you are **NOT pulling the wool out of the skin** (this will always happen) you are seeing if the wool breaks along its length.

Goats & Deer molt twice a year - to check get a damp cloth, stroke the coat and see if the hair comes out.

If you are too late and want skins done, keep your sheep over winter, shear with the rest of the flock in Spring/Summer and take to slaughter before they start to molt the following year. You will gain a bigger carcass, (mutton is now very popular) a spin able fleece and a bigger rug. Some of the big down breeds are more like wooly carpets!!

This is a seasonal business & everything comes at once. Our whole process is dedicated to tanning other people's skins for them in season. This process alone takes 3-4 weeks, unlike chrome or synthetic processes that are much quicker. You get what you pay for.

A few quick tips... Have the butcher use the knife as little as possible, punch the hide off. DO NOT scrape the hide, Pull or slice off the big fat pieces before salting, never scrape.

Get the timing right and we can have the best sheepskins anywhere in the world.