

TROPHY CARE

The Legendary White Buffalo



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HIGH ALPINE MEADOWS, GLACIERS, TREACHEROUS ROCKY CRAGS, ICE AND CLOUDS ARE HOME TO THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN GOAT, WHICH HAS THE REPUTATION OF BEING THE TOUGHEST BIG GAME ANIMAL TO HUNT IN NORTH AMERICA. CONDITIONS VARY IN MOUNTAIN GOAT HUNTING, MORE SO WHEN COMPARED TO ANY OTHER TROPHY HUNTING, HIGH-ALPINE FALL HUNTS TO ICE-COLD WINTER HUNTS.

When hunting this trophy animal you not only need a flat shooting rifle, good pack frame, climbing ropes, sometimes nerves of steel, but the will to walk, climb and scramble his turf. A good rule of thumb in hunting mountain goats is, "What goes up, must come down," don't let yourself get trapped in a crevasse or chimney which often happens when scrambling to get to a better shooting position or recovering a downed trophy.

Before starting your hunt make up your mind as to how you want this trophy mounted, a shoulder mount, a half life-size or a life-size mount. The time of the season you hunt decrees what length of hair your trophy will have, the later

the season the better the hair. Many avid goat hunters

place more emphasis on the length of the hair than they do on the size of the black dagger-like horns. On a lot of hunts, the big 'billies' are found only in

the last few hours of the day, making the skinning and packing chores dangerous due to the terrain. Your decision as to what type of mount you've selected could mean the difference between 10 to 20 pounds of extra dry weight that

must come down the mountain on your back, or a twice as heavy wet hide from rain or snow, and don't forget the weight of the boned meat.

From experience, during November and December hunts in Alaska, the cold weather will freeze a goat hide to the rocks almost immediately when wet, along with patches of hair and frozen fingers. A sharp knife and quick skinning techniques are necessary under these conditions.

Some important measurements to take before skinning are from the nose to front corner of the eye, and nose to the base and tip of the horns for exact reference when mounting. (See Figure A) Billy goats tend to have 'horse-like' heads depending on the area they come from, i.e., Alaska, Canada, Washington state, etc. Trophy class goats have nose to eye measurements ranging from 7-1/2 to 10-1/2 inches, so there is a great variable. Don't forget to take the nose to base of tail body length, measured over the spine for a life-size mount. Profile photos of the head and rear basal glands, which are located at the base of the horns, are very helpful in reproducing trophy mounts the way you would like to remember them, and give excellent reference material to the taxidermist that is not acquainted with this species.

When skinning for a shoulder mount you should make a cut around the body, behind the shoulders, which should include the top half of the leg stockings, as illustrated. (See Figure A) Make a cut up the neck, on one side of the mane and end this cut at the base of the skull. From this point cut from the outside of the horn bases, around the outside of the head between the ears and basal glands and meet at the

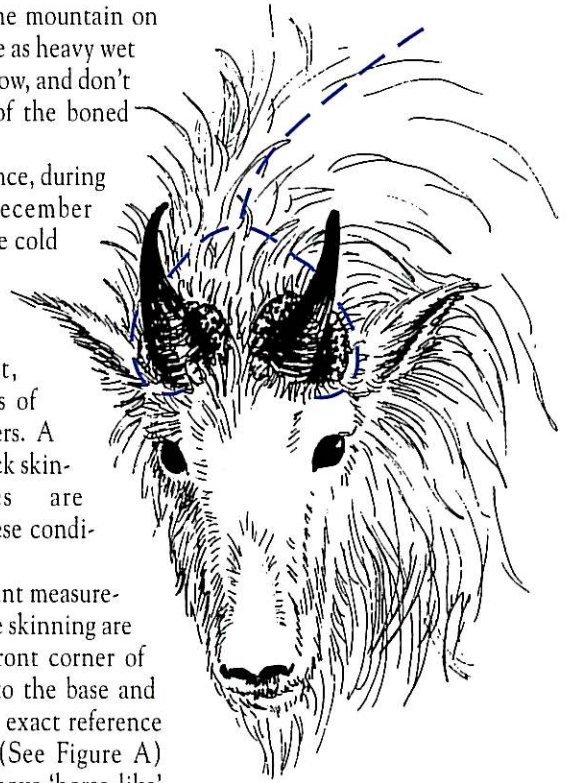
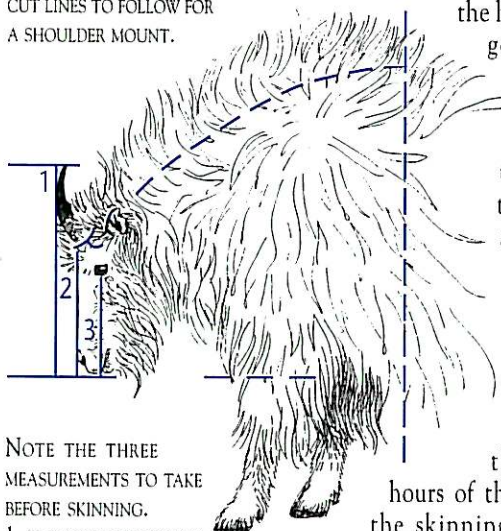


FIGURE B

THIS DIAGRAM SHOWS THE SPECIAL BASAL GLAND SKINNING CUTS AND THE 'Y' CUT TO BE USED FOR ALL THREE KINDS OF MOUNTS.

incision that stopped at the base of the skull. The reason for this special cut is to keep the basal glands intact. It is also important not to cut the hair when making this unorthodox side cut. When both sides are cut and meet at the base of the skull the traditional 'Y' cut is formed. (See Figure B above) Carefully cut a ring around each horn base to separate the skin from the horn material and finish skinning the head from this point. A good photograph of the donut-shaped fleshy basal glands themselves showing their size and coloration pattern is also good reference material. When skinning for a half life-size mount, just follow the above directions and include the front legs, cutting down the back of the leg from the elbow downward to the dew claws to the hooves and skin out. It is not necessary to open

FIGURE A
THE DOTTED LINES ARE THE CUT LINES TO FOLLOW FOR A SHOULDER MOUNT.



NOTE THE THREE MEASUREMENTS TO TAKE BEFORE SKINNING.

1- FROM THE NOSE TO TIP OF THE HORN, 2- FROM THE NOSE TO THE BASE OF THE HORN AND 3- FROM THE NOSE TO THE FRONT CORNER OF THE EYE.

the leg cuts through the side of the body skin. Blood on mountain goat hair doesn't soak into the hair as it does with Dall's sheep. The hair has a solid core, unlike the hollow hair of sheep. Washing the blood out of the hair is just cosmetic at this point. It will be thoroughly cleaned prior to completion of the tanning process.

When a life-size mount is wanted, the standard procedures for skinning are followed, as shown in the diagram. (See Figure C below) Starting at the brisket make an incision through the center of the abdomen to the anus, then at each

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hoof cut up the center of the back of the leg and cut straight through the abdomen incision and continue onwards to the corresponding hoof on the opposite side. Incise both the front and rear legs using this same technique. Skin the entire trophy from these incisions, plus using the above head skinning techniques as described earlier. A good technique to use when skinning is to make your entrance cut in the skin and pull upward on the knife as you cut forward. This cutting pressure pushes the hair upward and minimizes the loss and cutting of the hair.

When you arrive back in camp, lay the hide out and let the body heat escape, then salt generously after cleaning the hide of body

fats and meat that might still remain. When cutting the skull, cut downward from the top of the skull just in front of the eyes. Next make a level cut from the rear of the skull to the front cut to remove the horn cap. Using a knife, cut away as much meat and tissue as you can, only boil the skull and horns as a last resort, horn shrinkage will occur if boiling is used to clean the skull cap, and on a mountain goat, every sixteenth of an inch shrunk away while boiling can mean the difference between making 'the Book' and just being a really good goat.

If your trophy does make the book by 'green measuring' do not let the guide or taxidermist boil the skull. A better way to prepare it is to let it dry for the required 60-day drying period, have it officially measured, then clean the skull. To avoid bug and beetle infestation problems in the future, the hide and skull should be cleaned before mounting. A simple way to clean the skull after official measuring is to immerse the skull and horns in a bucket of water for a few days, when softened from this immersion the horns will come off easily with a slight outward twist. The skull can then be boiled and bleached before mounting.

WARNING:
On a lot of old bil-
lies the basal
glands at the
rear of
t h e
h o r n s
cause a corroding
affect on the horn
bases. Remove the horns from the

skull cores carefully after soaking, as described, making sure that you don't leave any of the actual horn material attached to the bony cores when twisting the horns off.

To keep your mount clean it is advisable to vacuum the mount twice a year, keep from hanging it above an active fireplace and free from a smoky environment. If you need to have the mount cleaned because of yellow smoke stains, nicotine stains, or accumulated dirt, its best to let a taxidermist clean it for you. The eyes can be cleaned with Windex and a soft cloth, and the horns will attain their original luster by coating with Mop and Glo floor wax and a damp cloth. If the hair needs combing and rearranging after vacuuming it is best to use a

dog grooming brush to separate the hair and refresh the growth patterns.

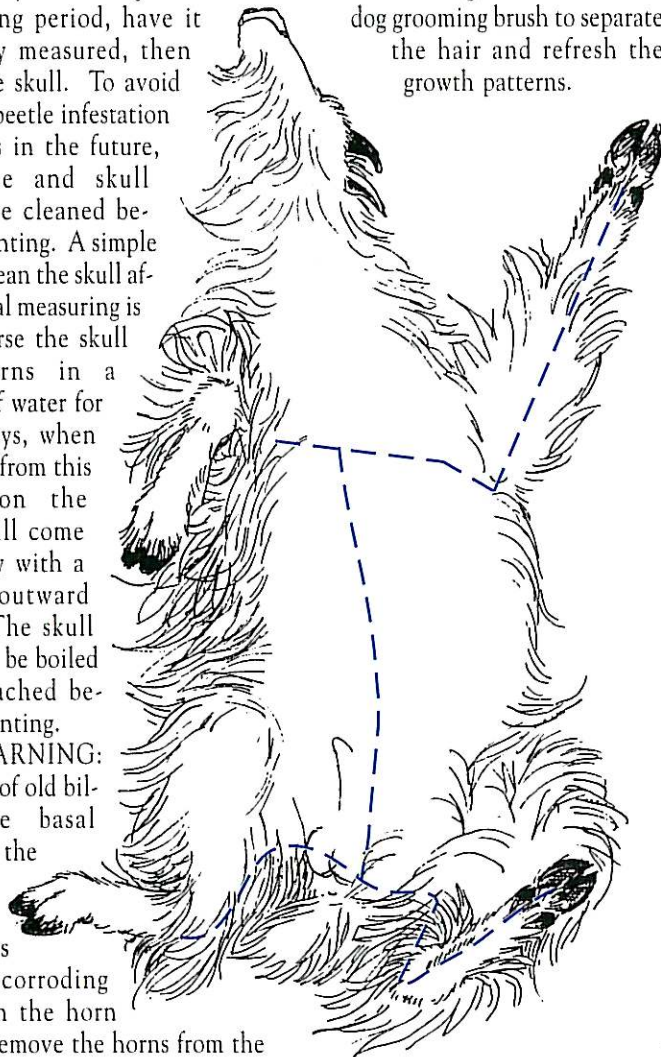


FIGURE C
THE DOTTED LINE INDICATES THE CUTS LINES TO USE FOR A LIFE-SIZE MOUNT. BE CAREFUL NOT TO CUT THE HAIR.