

Boiling skulls for European Mounts.

Start boiling water in a 20 litre boiler with 1 cup of salt. By the time the water is boiling the head should be skinned.

Skin out the head as normal using the Y cut for the antlers. Once the skinning has reached below the ears open the mouth and cut around the upper and lower palate along the edge of the teeth. Now work the skinning through the eyes down to the lower jaw and through to the nose area.

Using a small brush, paint vaseline around the antlers, this is to eliminate the bleaching of the skull during the boiling process.

Boil the entire skull as is, after skinning for about fifteen minutes in a 20 litre boiler with enough water to cover the entire skull. Add about a cup of salt to this solution. Remove the skull, allow to cool for a few minutes then force the lower jaw down and out of the skull. Trim the meat and tongue from the jaw. Remove the eyes from the main skull. Cut deep around each eye, then protrude the knife through the upper palate into the back of the eye socket and cut the remaining tissue to completely remove the eye.

Trim as much meat as possible and return the skull and the lower jaw to the boiling water. This time add about ½ cup of Sal Soda and ½ cup of Borax, this will help to cut the grease and dissolve some of the tissue to gel. Boil for about 15 minutes, remove again and trim some more. Try to remove the brain from the back of the skull. Using a the Dhem Fish Fleshing tool and a narrow spoon*.

It should be starting to get fairly clean by now.

Boil again for a final ten minutes then remove to cool. Clean up the remaining stubborn tissue with the FF tool and a pair of tweezers. Sprinkle with Borax while drying this can help bleach the skull and disinfect at the same time. **

Place the skull in a sunny window to complete the drying, again this will also help to bleach the clean skull.

The Important fact to remember is not to over boil the skull otherwise it will cause the thin bone structures to break down and also cause some teeth to dislodge. A safe rule is to never boil more than 15 minutes at any one time.

Another important point is that the grease or fat in the boiling solution will cause the skull to discolour. Never leave the skull for any length of time in the boiling solution after the boiling process. It would be a good habit to wash the skull in clean soapy water and rinse to remove any excess grease each time the skull is removed from the boiler.

* If you don't have a narrow spoon you can make one from an ordinary teaspoon grinding down the sides to fit the width of the opening at the back of the skull. This tool will come in handy for many other Taxidermy applications especially cleaning flesh from fish skins.

** (*A paste of magnesium carbonate and hydrogen peroxide 35% can also be used to bleach the skull.*)