

Bear Rug Part 1 Of 2.

This is a two part article for mounting a bear head for a rug. It starts out with a fresh NC Black Bear.



I then measure the distance between the calipers by laying them on a tape measure and record these measurements. I start working on the head by first skinning the inside of the mouth by separating where the lips join the gums.



I do this all the way around the mouth including the chin and by cutting through the nose cartilage.

Once the lips are cut free from the skull, I then turn the head nose-down and start skinning from the back of the head. Since this is going to be an open mouth rug mount, the incision can be extended from the belly, through the chest and neck about 6" from the tip of the chin. When skinning out the skull from the back of the head, be aware of where the ear butts and ear canal connect to. When you are at the ear butts, you need to cut through the ear cartilage and ear canal where it

meets the skull. Once past the ears be very careful around the eye area. The best way to prevent cutting holes in the eyes is to pull the skin from the skull with one hand and with the scalpel in the other hand, skin as close to the skull as possible. In the picture I am actually pulling the whole eye out of the orbit to insure I don't cut holes in the eyelids.



Once the skin is removed from the skull; the lips, nose, eyes, and ears need to be split just like any other animals after they are skinned. After splitting the lips I then split the nose cartilage down the middle , separating the nostrils and trimming away any excess or unneeded cartilage. Bears have a lobe on the outside of each nostril wing that should be split, I use a small pointed wood dowel to help invert these.



If you decide to use an artificial nose as many people do, you can, at this time, remove the nose pad by trimming and separating it from the

hide along the hairline around the nose. I then split the eye lids, then the ears.

I turn the ears by inverting them with one hand and with the scalpel in the other hand cutting the thin membrane that is holding the cartilage and the ear skin together. When I get 2/3 of the ear inverted I then either use a pointed and beveled wooden dowel or ear turners to push the tip of the ear outward so that it can be turned all the way out with a scalpel.



after the head is skinned out and the lips, nose, eyes, and ears are turned, the bones need to be removed from the feet. I find it easiest to remove the foot bones by cutting all way down the paw pad.



If the bear is going to be mounted the feet can easily be sewn when skinned this way. I then skin back the top of the foot from the bones

and at the same time skinning the paw pad side from the bones. Separate the membrane between each bone and continue skinning until the second knuckle is revealed. Then each bone needs to be skinned out individually. Hold the bone with one hand, and while pulling, cut the membrane around the bone till you reach the last knuckle joint.



Once you get to the last knuckle joint, it can be separated by slicing through the tissue that connects the back of the claw to the knuckle. Repeat for the other 4 bones remembering to keep constant tension on the bone while skinning each toe out.

The last thing I do before fleshing is to remove the tail bone.



I flesh most of the body, up to the neck, and feet on a beam using the draw knife method. I find it easier to flesh the head and feet on a fleshing wheel. But it can also be done by hand with a knife if a fleshing



wheel is not available. The beam I use is made of oak 2 x 4's bolted together and shaped with a planer.

If possible I always flesh towards the head. This makes it easier not to cut into the hair roots. There are two knives that I recommend for fleshing heavy layers of fat. The first is a Necker 600 knife. The Necker 600 knife is good for all around fleshing. It is versatile enough to go from small game to thick skinned animals like large boars.



Although the Necker 600 is a great all around fleshing knife it works better for animals that have meat and flesh that can be pushed off rather than sliced or cut off. The Necker knife can be sharpened to be razor sharp. The best way that I have found to sharpen it is with a flat – sided bastard file. I push the file towards the edge at a slight angle. The second knife I recommend for fleshing heavy fat and thick skinned animals is a Sheffield Knife. A true Sheffield Knife has an edge on each

side and is hand made in England. In my opinion it is easier to get the Sheffield Knife sharper than the Necker Knife . Unlike the Necker 600 knife, which works great for any animal, I would only recommend using the Sheffield Knife for thick skin animals like boars, large bison, or animals with a heavy fat layer such as bears. It is too easy to cut holes in deer and thin skinned animals with the large sharp blade on the Sheffeild. Both the Necker 600 knife and Sheffield Knife can be purchased from Head Quarters Taxidermy Supply and both are used almost daily at Carolina Fur Dressing.

When using the Sheffield Knife, I angle the curved side of the blade slightly inward toward the skin and slice at a downward angle.



To sharpen this knife I use a smooth sharpening stone. A butcher's steel will also work.

Whichever fleshing tool you use, it is very important to remember not to cut into the hair roots of an animal. If you can feel the hair roots on the flesh side, that is a good indication that you are taking too much off. Cut hair roots will cause bald spots on the hair side. It is always better to leave a thin layer of membrane on the flesh side of the skin then to cut it too close.

I continue to flesh the head all the way down to the neck. I try to do as much with the Sheffield as I can and then the rest I do on a fleshing wheel. After I flesh the entire body to the neck and down most of the legs it will look like the picture. Everything I could have gotten off with the Sheffield Knife I did, the feet and head have to either be fleshed down with a scalpel or skived by hand or on a fleshing wheel. Flesh the meat on the face, including the lips, nose and eyes like any other

animal. Don't forget to flesh the fat out of the feet and off the paw pads.

Once I flesh a bear, I then salt it, and roll it up, and let it drain overnight. The next morning I salt it again and hang it up flesh side out. This lets the excess fluids drain, and the skins begins to dry. Sometimes I will have to salt the hide 2-3 more times depending on the humidity in the air and the amount of fluids that needs to be pulled out of the skin. A fan to keep the air moving, and a dehumidifier in the room will greatly speed up the drying process.

Once the skin is dried, it is ready to be tanned. This bear was turned over to Carolina Fur Dressing to be dry tanned because it is going to be rugged.

In the next tutorial the bear will be tanned and D. Price will then install a new style rug shell offered exclusively at H.Q supply and a new mouth cup that is completely finished, detailed, and h



as finished detailed lips.

