

T.A.S.CO/RITTEL's
Rancher's Tanning Kit
(Catalog #RTK-10)

RITTELS/RINEHARTS RANCHERS TANNING KITS are designed to produce soft, white leathered, natural looking fur, hair or woolskins – with no discoloration. The leather is strong, durable, holds stitches well and is excellent for garment work. The RANCHERS KIT contains all the ingredients needed except Salt – which would be cheaper to buy locally.

Skinning – Skin all your capes/skins to be tanned, using an incision from the lower jaw, along the belly to the base of the tail. From this line also cut up the inside of each leg. Free the skin on the legs by cutting it loose at the first digit back from the claws, or if hoofed, just above the hooves. After skinning, if the skin is still warm open it up and hang it to cool for 1-2 hours and then proceed to cure it in preparation for tanning.

Curing – On light skins or furs, curing can be avoided, as they dry quickly because of their thinness. But on thickly fleshed skins such as goat, sheep, deer or heavier skins they should always be salted. Salting quickly removes moisture and fluids from the skins. To salt your skins, lay them out flat, flesh side up, and liberally run non-iodized salt into the flesh. Leave a thin layer of salt on the skin when you finish. Then fold the skin and place it on an inclined surface to drain overnight. Leave the skin salted for 1-2 days (the thicker the flesh, allow more time for it to drain) until the meat and fat firm up and it's ready to flesh clean.

Fleshing – On fresh, light skins or furs, they can be fleshed as they begin to dry and the membrane begins to firm. For salted skins, after 1 -2 days, shake out the excess salt, and then flesh the flesh side clean. Remove all the meat and fat on the flesh – including the membrane next to the flesh! On all skins, this membrane appears as a tough layer of cellophane – it must be completely removed before the skin will tan properly! The easiest fleshing method is to flesh the skin on a beam using a two handled fleshing knife. If you desire to dry your larger skins and tan them later – after fleshing, lay them out, or tack them out flat, and re-salt them. Leave this layer of salt on the skin until it dries, then shake the loose salt away and store the skin in a cool well ventilated area, away from moisture and animals. Before drying any skin – be sure the fur, hair or wool is dry.

Degreasing – If there is any doubt about whether or not your skins are greasy – degrease them!! Fats prevent the even penetration of the pickling and tanning agents and must be removed. For a degreasing solution and general use, use a full strength bath of Odorless Mineral Spirits (Kerosene without the odor) – or for a light degreasing solution, use RITTELS RD – 601. Mix it 2-4 tablespoonful's with each gallon of water. Wash the skins in the degreasing solution for 10 – 15 minutes. IF the skin still appears or feels greasy – use a clean solution. IF tanning Sheepskins, use only RITTELS RD-601 or WD-608. Other agents are difficult to remove from the wool. Do not soak your skins in this degreasing solution – only bathe them and knead the flesh to remove the fat. After degreasing, squeeze away the excess degreaser from the skin and rinse.

Washing – If you have used Odorless Mineral Spirits to degrease your skins – use a washing solution!! If you used RITTELS RD-601 or WD-608 as a degreaser this step can be avoided, UNLESS the skin is still dirty. To prepare a washing solution use 1 or 2 tablespoonful of Tide or Dawn per each 1 gallon of water used. Do not soak your skins in this solution. Use it only as a wash and then rinse the skins thoroughly.

Pickling – Pickling acidifies the skins and prepares them for tanning. Keep the solution at between 70 -85 degrees Fahrenheit. The safest method is to use our recommended Vinegar/Salt pickling method. White Vinegar is best!!! It contains 5% natural Acetic Acid. It is safe to use and does an excellent job. Always use a plastic container for pickling and tanning. A less expensive alternative is to use Oxalic Acid for pickling. It is a POISON!!!!!! When wet it can be just as dangerous as the Sulfuric Acid. Handle it cautiously and wear rubber gloves when working with the pickled skins. Use Oxalic Acid only if you are an adult. Both pickling agents (White Vinegar or Oxalic) work well and give identical results.

Vinegar Pickling Formula – Mix enough pickling solution to completely submerge the skins. For every 1 gall of pickling solution needed mix:

2 Quarts of White Vinegar
2 Quarts of Water
1 LB. of salt (1 ½ cup-full of salt = 1 Lb.)

Oxalic Acid Pickling Formula – Mix enough pickling solution to completely submerge the skins. For every 1 gallon of pickling solution needed mix:

1 gallon of water
0.34 oz. Of Oxalic Acid Crystals (3 level teaspoonful's = .34 oz.)
1 Lb. of salt (1 ½ capfuls of salt = 1 Lb.)

Stir the pickling solutions well before placing the skins into it. Both the White Vinegar or Oxalic Acid pickling solutions should test at a 2.2-2.5 PH. When mixed, place your skins into the pickle agent and stir them periodically. Most light furs and skins will pickle within 48 hours. Heavier skins should be left in longer, at least 60 hours. As they become pickled, they will turn and opaque white. When pickled, they can be tanned or left in the pickle until you are ready. Be sure to stir your pickling solution each day. Skins can safely be left in the pickle solution for at least 2 weeks.

Tanning – When you are ready to tan your skins, and they are fully pickled, remove them from the pickle, squeeze away the excess solution back into the pickle, and set them aside while you mix the KWIK_TAN tanning agent into the pickling solution. For every 1 gallon of pickling solution (water) add 9 oz. of salt, 12 oz. of RITTELS KWIK_TAN. Stir in the tanning agent before returning the skins. This mixture should test a 4.0 PH level.

Place the skins back into the pickling/tanning solution and allow them to remain in this solution for 24 hrs. Heavy skins should remain in the solution for 48 hours and/or until they turn completely white throughout. To test for a full tan, cut a small piece from the edge of the skin and examine it to see if it is completely white. When the skins are tanned, remove them from the tan and wash them lightly in a mild Baking Soda Solution.

To mix this Baking Soda solution:

2 tablespoon full of Baking Soda
1 gallon of water
Use cool water and do not allow the skins to soak in the solution.

Oiling – After tanning all skins require oiling. Prepare your oiling mixture by mixing 1 part ProPlus (PP-301) to 2 parts hot tap water. Apply this mixture to the flesh while it is still hot. The skin should be at room temperature. Rub or brush the oil and water mixture onto the flesh side of the skin. Apply it carefully along the edges. After oiling, fold the skin flesh side to flesh side and set it aside for 4 – 6 hours to absorb the oil. Keep this flat!! After this initial period the skin can then be hung to drain and dry. Lightly fleshed furs usually only require 1 coat of oil, but thicker skins should have several coats applied.

Damp-Drying – After tanning the fur or hair should be dried as much as possible without drying the flesh too. It is important that the flesh remains damp and holds a lot of water so that the oil can achieve penetration later. Towel-dry the fur/hair or tumble them for 5 to 10 minutes in

sawdust, then shake them out. Do not hang your skins to drain, for draining will remove much of the water needed in the tissues for oiling.

Drying & Softening – Now allow the skin to dry – drying will depend primarily on the thickness of the skin. When it is almost completely dry, but still slightly damp, begin to work and stretch it with your hands. It is important to begin this softening at exactly the right time. If when you fold the skin and a light streak appears this means it is time to begin. Continue to work the skin until it is completely dried. If you start to work the skin too late rather than continue, stop and dampen the flesh then place it in a plastic bag. Then come back to it the next day and begin working on it again. The heavily fleshed skins may not all you to produce the extreme softness that you are familiar with when tanning thinner furs.