
**Leather — Raw skins — Guidelines for
preservation of goat and sheep skins**

*Cuir — Peaux brutes — Lignes directrices pour la préservation des
peaux de chèvre et de mouton*

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Foreword

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 120 *Leather*, Subcommittee SC 1, *Raw hides and skins, including pickled pelts*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document provides guidelines for processes of preservation that lead to a higher quality of preserved goat and sheep skins. Such preserved goat and sheep skins are subsequently subjected to further treatments for manufacturing of leather and eventually for production of leather goods.

This document has indicated preservation procedures that should be followed to prevent either of the following situations:

- conditions occurring through the preservation treatments which affect the processability of skins;
- various defects that can form on goat and sheep skins due to inadequate preservation conditions and during the period of storage and delivery to the users.

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Leather — Raw skins — Guidelines for preservation of goat and sheep skins

1 Scope

This document provides guidelines for various preservation methods for raw goat and sheep skins. The preservation methods are needed to suppress microbiological activity and to maintain the quality of the skins during storage.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

No terms and definitions are listed in this document.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

4 Characteristics of salt and auxiliary substances used in preservation processes

4.1 Characteristics of salt

For preservation by salting, clean salt should be used. Halophilic bacteria get acclimatised to salt media and can grow even in the presence of high salt concentrations. During bacterial growth, they produce pink, red or violet pigments on salted skins, called red-heat. Sea or lake salt tends to be more susceptible to contamination risk and development of red-heat. Hence, using rock salt is advantageous as it is free from chemical impurities.

Salt used in preservation processes should preferably contain 98 % sodium chloride (NaCl) of total dry weight and should not contain clumped particles. The impurities should not exceed the following limits otherwise the salt may negatively affect the quality of the finished product:

- Total calcium (Ca) and magnesium (Mg) compounds in salt: 1 %.
- Total iron (Fe) compounds: 0,01 %.

Particle size of salt is also important to achieve effective preservation. If salt particles are very fine, salt tends to form pasty patches with uneven coverage. If salt particles are very coarse, they can immediately fall off the skin while handling. Particle size also affects speed of dissolution; therefore, to ensure an appropriate dissolution, particle size of salt should be 2 mm to 3 mm.

4.2 Quantity of salt

To ensure proper dehydration of raw skins, the quantity of salt should not be less than 30 % of the fresh weight.

4.3 Auxiliary chemicals and preservation mixtures

Improvement in preservation could be achieved by the use of additional substances along with common salt.

The addition of sodium carbonate (Na_2CO_3) to the salt mixture prevents the formation of iron stains on skins, which can form due to existing impurities in salt. If iron impurities exceed 0,01 % of the total mass, iron stains occur in limed pelt, resulting in inferior quality.

Restricted pesticides or other toxic substances, such as pentachlorophenol (PCP), should not be used in preservation mixtures.

5 Preservation methods of skins

5.1 General

When an animal is alive, the animal skin serves as an anatomical barrier between external physical, chemical and biological agents and the internal environment. After the death of the animal, the skin becomes susceptible to microbiological spoilage because of its natural structure and excess water content. Preservation is necessary to maintain the quality and commercial value of the skin.

Before the preservation process, skins are conditioned by carrying out certain basic operations such as cleaning, draining and trimming in order to ensure effective preservation. Skins are subsequently cured, which can take 4 h to 5 h depending on environmental conditions. There are several ways to preserve skins to inhibit micro-organic putrefaction and autolysis.

Microorganisms need humid conditions to survive. Hence, the most important step for preservation of skins is decreasing the water content of fresh skins, which will prohibit bacterial growth and activity.

5.2 Drying

Drying is one of the oldest and simplest preservation forms, in which the water content is lowered to a certain level where microorganisms are inactive and unable to spoil skins. Although dry conditions are hostile for many microorganisms, some could stay dormant until the environment becomes favourable again.

In this method, dehydration of raw skins is carried out by natural airflow at ambient temperature in the shade. Extreme conditions and irregular foldings should be avoided. Direct sunlight and high temperatures can cause flash drying of outer layers but the inner layers still retain moisture. Hence, the drying is not homogeneous. Cross-sectional transfer of water can take place in such cases, thereby leading to decay during storage.

Dry cured skins should not contain the following defects or formations which negatively affect the quality:

- overdried and crusted areas and irregular foldings;
- discolorations and livid areas;
- small or large tears caused by autolysis;
- insect infestations and digested areas;
- wetted areas or skin masses caused by improper storage;
- partial gelatinisation due to application of high temperature while drying.

If skins have one or more of these defects, they might be degraded until castoff depending on the degree of existing defects.