

**HELLO**

Welcome to the second edition of the Down Under Taxidermy and Hunting (DUTH) news letter.

Since the last newsletter, after a lot of research, we have invested in a new piece of taxidermy equipment ; a freeze dryer. It is the only one used for taxidermy on mainland Australia, as far as we know. Freeze dryers have been, and still are, used quite extensively in the USA for over 30 years. This piece of equipment will help us make smaller taxidermy specimens (animals such as foxes, cats, hares, rabbits, etc) more anatomically correct. It will also preserve velvet antlers (even soft and bulbous antlers) with minimal to no shrinkage, but one of the main reasons this freeze dryer was purchased, is to preserve pets. There are no forms available for pets and as they come in so many different shapes and sizes, so each form has to be custom made & sculpted. This is a lengthy and expensive process. The freeze dryer eliminates the need for using forms, and so reduces the cost involved in recreating pets, and the finished product looks very 'life like'.

If you are interested in using this service or have further questions, don't hesitate to contact us.

**IN THE FIELD**

Last time we discussed how to get the skin off the body of the animal for a shoulder mount. This time we will work through the steps involved to get the skin off the head.



The tools I use to take the skin off the head are a scalpel with a no22 blade, a skinning knife with a nice curved edge and a flat screwdriver that has had the front rounded off a little bit, so as not to cut through the skin so easily.



These pictures show the cuts you should have ended up with after caping the skin off the main body as discussed in the last newsletter.

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Continue skinning towards the ear butts. Cut through the ear butt along the side of the skull, making sure you stay close to the bone.

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Continue skinning around the pedicles (base of antlers), all the way up to the coronet band (where the skin meets the antlers). Using a dull object, such as a flat screwdriver, will also work to lever the skin from the coronet. I do not recommend a knife, other than to cut the skin off around the pedicle. Animals with horns need to be cut instead of torn at the coronet band. A bit difficult between goats horns, but possible.

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Skin down the face until you notice the eye orbit (as marked by the black line in the photo above left). Continue skinning close to the bone. You will start notice a bluish hue through the membrane. This is the eye showing through the membrane. Place a finger in the eye hole from the hair side, and pull away from the skull. Continue to cut along the eye orbit and cut through the thin bluish membrane. Continue skinning until the eye skin has been completely cut trough, making sure not to cut into the eyelid itself.

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To remove the skin from the tear duct, pull the skin from the eyehole. If the skin does not freely peel from the bone, carefully skin with the knife close to the bone, coming from below, while pulling the skin.

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Skin down the muzzle until you feel a hollow spot in the mouth area. Cut through into the cheek and then continue to cut down towards the front of the face along the tooth line while you are peeling the skin off the face. Continue this until you get near the nose, and near the chin on the bottom jaw (refer pic above right).

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Flip the skin back over onto the face and starting from the nose & chin, cut along the inside gum line, close to the mandible. Continue the cut down along the mandible, also cutting through the nasal cartilage from this side. Finish the skinning.

Now to keep the cape in good shape, treat it as you would meat, meaning, let it cool or freeze as soon as possible, or deliver to your taxidermist ASAP. If freezing the skin, make sure you put it into a good, sealed plastic bag to avoid freezer burn. Do not salt at this stage, as ears, lips and nose still need to be turned.

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When cutting the antlers from the skull, start by cutting 1½ inches below the back of the skull or just above where the spinal cord goes in. Continue down through lower 1/2 or 2/3 of eye sockets, then through the nose bridge. Be sure to leave the front half of the eyes and nose bridge intact if possible. Doing this will leave valuable reference points for the taxidermist when he is mounting your animal. Also, you can mount the antlers onto a shield until they are ready to mount.

Remove the eyes, brain and extra meat, then boil the skull for 1 to 2 hours to help remove the meat and clean the skull. You can add some baking soda or washing detergent to the water to help with the process.

Next time we will discuss how to turn the ears nose and lips.

**HUNTING – QUEENSLAND MARY VALLEY RED DEER 2012**

This year's red deer season was a great success. Lots of animals were sighted and some good trophies taken and some good video footage taken by Darryl. At first it was looking like it would be a very wet season with a lot of mud and water about, but as the season approach, it turned out to be dry, right up to the last few days. This made for a great time in the bush.

Following are pictures of some trophies taken this season.



Paul flew up from Sydney. He arrived in the afternoon and as we drove into the hunting property, we spotted a stag holding does in a gully off the road. We decided to try for the stag. So hunting cloths were thrown on and rifle unpacked. After a quick, but careful stalk, we were in position with just enough shooting light. A carefully placed shot, and Paul had his first Queensland red on the deck. A heavy 4 x 5. This within 3 hours from being picked up from the airport!

The next day saw us chasing a deer that had been chased unsuccessfully several times in the last weeks. We were sitting on a hill when on the opposite slope a stag answered a call from me. The stag started to come our way and as he broke through the bushes I made out he was a good stag with nice tops. I told Paul this was a great stag and well worth taking. Another shot of about 200m and another perfect kill. A beautiful 6 x 6. I think if Paul had smiled much more, he might have torn the corners of his mouth!



Scott was down from the cane fields in the Burdekin area again this year to get his fix of our hills.

He arrived late evening and meet Darryl and myself on the road at the hunting property. We were listening for stags, so we could work out where to hunt with clients the next morning. After greetings, we told Scott about a stag we had been seeing for the last few days in a big open flat. It was a big 4x4. At first Scott was not too keen as he already had a 6x5 from the last season. Darryl had a video of the 4x4, so I told Scott to watch the movie. I had a feeling he'd be keen after watching the movie. After seeing the size of the stag, Scott WAS keen.

The next morning saw us at the edge of the flat. We spotted the 2 does first, and then heard the stag. He was in the middle of the flat. We worked ourselves closer and got a good lean. The stag started to move off, so a few quick calls from me and he stood broadside at about 250m. A shot from Scott and the stag was secured. The stag did not disappoint as we got up to him.

A few days later saw us on another property. I was out with another client and Scott was hunting by himself. Scott heard this stag up the hill and stalked towards him. As he got near to the spot, a stag grunted and took off in front of Scott. He saw the stag had tops and looked good. He brought the rifle up, a quick shot and the stag was dead. A nice 5 x 5. Scott ran out of light to cape the stag out, so next morning saw us back up the hill to finish capping and hauling out the meat.



Leo was up from Tasmania.

The first morning saw us up in the mountains. After climbing the first mountain Leo decided our mountains MUST be bigger than his back home! We heard a stag roaring in the distance. After closing the gap, we got ourselves set up, as the stag seemed to be coming our way. After not much waiting the stag appeared only about 40m up the hill from us. Leo was already set up for the shot. I had a quick look and decided it was a taker, so I whispered to Leo to shoot. Nothing happened, so I said it again several times. The stag was in the clear and I could not work out what was going on. Eventually the stag took off. I asked Leo what the problem was. He said nothing. Apparently he was waiting for me to tell him to shoot. As he didn't hear me, he thought I didn't want the stag shot. Then I found out Leo was wearing ear plugs and did not hear me. We had a chuckle about the situation, but not for long as I was able to call to the stag and managed to turn him around. He stopped broadside about 100m out. A shot from Leo and we had a nice 5 x 5. The brows were nearly non-existent, so a good stag to take out of the herd.

A few days later saw us at another property. It was the last day of the hunt and we had chased a good stag, but lost him in the scrub. A bit later we spotted a spiker out in the open and he kept looking back towards a scrub edge. We snuck up a bit closer so we could have a look at what the stag was looking at. We spotted some does and then heard the stag. A look through the binoculars showed it was a good stag. So a stalk was planned. It was getting dark soon, so we had to move fast. After a brisk walk out of view from the deer, we closed the gap to about 120m. We crawled up to the edge of a spur and the stag was in full view in front of us roaring his heart out. What a sight. Leo got a good lean and moments later the stag was dead. It was a great 5 x 5 and Leo had his upgrade. It was very late that night by the time the capping was done, the stag was packed onto the quad and we rolled into camp.



David came all the way from Perth to hunt our mighty reads with a bow.

After a few unsuccessful stalks and a lot of hills, we managed to get close to a stag that was roaring up in a bit of a basin. Once we where about 80m out from the stag hidden in the bushes, we set ourselves up for a shot. David was down and in front of me by about 7 m with the stag to our left. I started to call out to the stag with doe calls. It took a while for the stag to start moving, but all of a sudden he was on his way to check out the doe he could hear. I heard him come and got David to draw back. The stag appeared and it was a good one. I whispered to Dave it was a shooter and not to move a muscle. It took the stag a little while to make his way to us. On the last stretch, he came in fast and I had to grunt to get him to stop coming. He stopped 7m in front of Dave, who did not hesitate to pull the trigger on his release aid. The stag was hit well and dropped in sight of us, about 40m from us. It was a great 5 x 5 and a good trophy for a bow hunter.

Dave is going to be back next year to give the stags and the hills another go. He quit a job to come hunting with us this year. Let's hope he does not have to do that again next year!



Martin has hunted many times with me and has shot some nice deer. He still had to get his big Queensland 6 x 6. The first morning, we stalked in to a few stags and looked them over. There was a nice one, but we could not get a shot off. The next morning saw us up a big ridge and stalking towards a roaring stag. We spotted him about 140m out on the point of the hill in front of us. A quick look showed the stag was a good one. Martin got a lean and moments later the shot sounded out and the stag fell over on the spot. When we got up to the stag we realized how good it actually was. A good 6 x 6 and well earned, as Martin has been chasing one for several years now.

### **HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES 2013**

Next season should be very good for Red Deer antler growth as there has been plenty of rain and the stags are staying fat. A lot of very good stags were sighted this year and not shot. These stags will be excellent trophies for the 2013 season.

We are half booked for the Red Deer 2013 season, so don't wait long to book a hunt with us.

### **Bintang Hunt**

If Bintang is an animal you have wanted to add to your trophy collection, then this is an opportunity you can not afford to miss. A seven day hunt including a Bintang bull will cost you \$5000. The only other costs involved are flights. These hunts are in the heart of Bintang country and there are many good bulls around. These hunts are conducted in the dry season, so from about May to October. For more information please contact me.

**Africa Safari**

I'm also organising a group hunt to Africa around August/September 2013. This will be a value for money, 12 day, plains game hunt. This trip is for first timers or people who are not real confident organising a trip themselves in regards to permit requirements and other documentation. I can organise all gun permits and flights for you. This trip is also perfect for hunters who simply don't want to, or don't have time to do the legwork required to organise a trip like this. Another advantage of a group hunt is having fellow hunters along to share the experience with.

The hunting will be one on one, so you will not miss out on hunting time. For more information on costs and dates, send me an email or give me a call.

Best phone number to get us on is 0412979295 or email [markusmich@aussiebroadband.com.au](mailto:markusmich@aussiebroadband.com.au)

In the next newsletter I'll explain how to turn ears inside out and split lips and noses with pictures to explain.

For anyone interested, the hunting and outdoors expo at Morayfield, Queensland is on again. It will be held on the 4th and 5th August 2012. See you there. For more information contact Mick on 0488735308.

Thank you for reading this newsletter and hopefully it was informative. If you would like to see some examples of our work or want to see deer taken in previous years, go to our website at [www.downundertaxidermy.com.au](http://www.downundertaxidermy.com.au)

We from the team at Down Under Taxidermy and Hunting would like to thank you for your support in the past and future. We aim to please everyone where possible.

Cheers

Markus