CURING OF LEOPARD SKIN – A SIMPLE TECHNIQUE

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INTRODUCTION

Leopard skin is highly priced and very rare. The fur is generally deep yellow in colour with dark spots or rosettes .Its ventral parts are white (Jacob Cheeran, 2004). A five-year-old male leopard, which was brought to the Veterinary College for treatment after rescue from a trap, succumbed to death. The Chief Conservator of forest donated it to the college for investigation, study and preservation. After post-mortem the leopard was skinned and the skin was preserved using a simple technique.

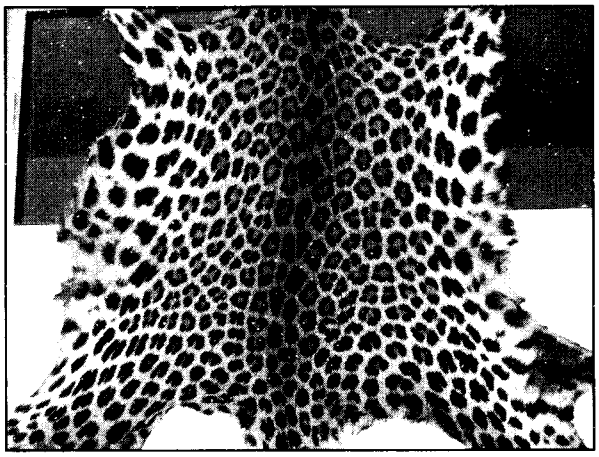
MATERIALS AND METHODS

The five-year-old male leopard weighed 51.25kg. It had a body-length of 139cm from nose to the base of the tail. The total length was 70cm and height at shoulder was 75cm. It had a heart girth of 71cm. The skin immediately after skinning weighed 12.38 kg (excluding skin of head and paws)

The skin was spread on a table and the meat and fat was removed completely using a sharp scalpel. It was then cured using a mixture of 50g Copper Sulphate and 25g Potassium Alum (Aluminium Potassium Sulphate). The skin was then thoroughly washed and allowed to dry under fan. After taking measurements of the skin, a wooden frame of 210cm. length and 120cm. width was prepared and the skin was stretched and nailed on to it. Skin was then painted with 10 percent Formalin (Formaldehyde solution). A mixture of 100g. wood ash in 200g. saw dust was prepared and smeared on to the skin. It was left to dry for 36 Hours over a hot plate at a temperature of 200°C, as there was heavy downpour during those days. During curing the room temperature varied between 21° C-24 °C. After 36 hours Potassium Alum was applied thoroughly and the skin was scraped using a blunt knife, to remove all traces of fat and meat. The skin then became soft and supple. Again a coat of 10 percent Formalin was painted and skin was dried over hotplate. Every 48 hours the frame was overturned so that both the sides dried regularly. After 96 hours the skin was painted with creosote and cured completely. It was allowed to dry for three more days.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A leopard skin 120cm wide and 210 cm long was cured in seven days using Formalin, Copper Sulphate, Potassium Alum,



wood ash, saw dust and creosote. There was no loss of hair and the beauty of the skin was maintained. Copper Sulphate, acts as an antimicrobial agent with fungicidal and bactericidal actions. Potassium Alum, wood ash and saw dust act as tanning agents. Skin is made up of lots of fibers. These tanning agents penetrate the hide and coat all these fibers. This changes its chemical structure and prevents it from rotting. Creosote makes the skin fibers waterproof and gives it a light-brown colour. (Web reference). Painting with 10 percent Formalin fixes the skin by stabilization of protein (Drury and Wallington, 1980).

SUMMARY

A new technique was adapted for curing of Leopard skin by using Formalin, Copper Sulphate, Potassium Alum; wood ash saw dust and creosote. After seven days the skin was cured completely. ❑

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