

Trophy Care

Simply because a hide has been preserved and mounted doesn't mean that it won't require any further care.

While trophies that exhibit better quality work tends to not require as much maintenance as those with careless craftsmanship, all trophies will eventually need to be taken care of, and possibly even refurbished. However, by taking into account the kinds of things that can cause a trophy to degrade over time, it's possible to avoid most common types of damage.

The best way to take care of your trophy is to keep it from needing any extra maintenance in the first place.

- Keeping mounts in climate controlled areas, away from dampness, and out of sunlight will go far in preserving the integrity of the hide, the hair, and the coloring.
- Cool, dry places away from light are the best places for trophies.
- Excessive dampness can lead to mold and mildew, while overly hot, dry conditions can desiccate the hide and cause it to crack or split.
- Dust can remove skin oils and will discolor fur or hair, so mounted animals should be given frequent gentle dusting, and not touched more than absolutely necessary.
- While discoloration won't actually damage the hair, it will make it look dirty, and it can be very, very difficult, if not completely impossible, to remove.
- Dirty hides don't look realistic, so poor trophy hygiene can ruin the effect of even the best taxidermy.

Like any other piece of expensive decorative artwork, a trophy should be kept and handled the same way one would treat a fine, valuable painting.

After a trophy has been damaged by sun exposure or the effect of time on poorly-done taxidermy, there's not much that beginning taxidermy hobbyists or laypeople can do, aside from re-gluing the occasional lost eye. Fortunately, however, there are professionals who have a lot of experience in restoring old, museum-quality taxidermy pieces and antique heirloom trophies, and are able to fix some common problems old mounts run into. Cracked or split hides can be re-glued, and sun-faded fur can be dyed back to its original color. However, many of these fixes are complicated, time-consuming, and expensive, and well worth avoiding if at all possible. There's also a limit to how many times a hide can be dyed or glued, so the longer a trophy can go between needing maintenance, the better.

How to Take Care of Your Taxidermy Mount

Proper care of your taxidermy mount will make your mount last for many years to come. Taxidermy in general is not cheap especially in this economy, so it's in your best interest to make sure your mount stays clean and is well taken care of. There are many ways to take care of your mount. This article briefly goes over the most common ways to clean a mount.

We will cover:

- 1. Best places for display**
- 2. General cleaning**
- 3. Antler cleaning**
- 4. Cleaning the eyes**
- 5. Cleaning fish mounts**
- 6. Preserving Your Mounts from Insects**
- 7. Professional Cleaning**

Best Places for Display

Proper mount care begins with making sure that your mount is not stored in a location where there is direct sunlight for a prolonged period of time. Try to avoid displaying mounts near the window or drafty areas. Sunlight and extreme temperature changes will drastically age your mount over time and make it look awful. You should always try to keep your mounts away from any continuous heat source. We know that they look great above the fireplace but the heat can damage the colors in the mounts fur. Also try to limit the amount of exposure from smoking, this will change the color of the fur and cause the eyes to be very cloudy.

General cleaning

In most cases, avoid any industrial cleaners. Most mounts, like anything else, will collect dust over time. One way to get dust off your mount is to use microfiber material to gently wipe the dust off. Vacuuming the room regularly will help to keep most of the dust off of your mount in-between cleaning sessions. Some individuals use their vacuum with a non-spinning brush and hose attachment to get dust off the mount. But the most effective method is just wiping the mount down with a microfiber cloth. Be sure not to damage the hide if you choose to use your vacuum! Always brush in the direction of the fur. *For small mammals (squirrels, hares, etc.) use a feather duster to remove dust and dirt. You can also fluff the fur by using a hair dryer on low heat and low power. A quick once over with the hair dryer after using a feather duster will allow you to groom the mount with minimal effort. This method should also be used for freeze dried specimens. For heavily soiled mounts, one can also use a slightly damp sponge and warm water. Again, be sure to wipe in the direction of the lay of the hair and wipe dry with a lint-free cloth.

Tip: Vacuum with the direction of the hair & do not press down on hide of your mount! Also DO NOT vacuum birds!

Antler Cleaning

A simple wipe down of the antlers should do the trick, but for the cleaning nuts it may not be enough. If you want your antlers to look awesome try using lemon pledge or lemon oil to make them antlers look great. Of course, wipe off any excess substance.

Cleaning the Eyes

Use a damp microfiber cloth or Q-tip to remove dust and to polish to a shine. Do not use chemicals of any sort (alcohol, Windex, vinegar, ammonia, etc.) as this can damage the color of the eyelids and remove the protective gloss that is covering the glass eye.

Cleaning Fish Mounts

I've heard stories of individuals cleaning their fish mount with bread. I personally don't recommend that. If your mount is a fiberglass reproduction, blow the dust off and wipe with a damp cloth or sponge. If the fish is actual skin, use a damp cloth and wipe gently with the direction of the scale. (DAMP=rag that is slightly moist to the touch). If you try to wring out the rag not a single drop of water should come out.) If you get your (live skin) fish saturated you could do quite a bit of damage to the mount. This can provide a surface for mold and bacteria to grow on the mount which could destroy it.

Preserving Your Mounts from Insects

Your mounts are trophies for a lifetime, so why shouldn't they last a lifetime. Moths, beetles, and other small insects love to live and feed on mounts. Some burrow into the hairs while others will eat your mounts beyond any repairs. To avoid this problem you should regularly check your mounts for any moths, larva, and cocoons that may have inhabited your mount. Some other evidence of a possible infestation can be noted by; finding piles of sawdust forming on the floor, your mount slowly starting to look "bald", and your mount having a dandruff look to its fur. Check the ears of your mount and any other cavities in which they could live and lay eggs.

If you should find any sign of insect infestation you should do the following:

- Take your mounts out of the house and spray them with a commercial grade moth cleaner, leave them in some type of storage (barn, shed, etc.) You should spray them on a regular basis to prevent this problem from happening. (Once in the Spring & Fall)
- If you have tried this and it has not gotten rid of the problem you should call your taxidermist and bring your mounts in to have them fumigated.

***DO NOT DELAY**

If you find this problem act on it fast. Before you know it you will have an insect problem in all your mounts. Should you find an insect problem you should treat all your mounts as if they have been exposed.

Professional Cleaning

Here at Smack's Taxidermy we have the experience to help assist you in cleaning your mounts. Whether it is a Deer Shoulder Mount or a Full Mounted Musk Ox, we can perform cleaning and repairs to keep it looking as beautiful as the day you captured it. Pricing is based on size and species of the mount. Please call for a price quote.

*****Please note that these are all recommendations based on our experience, we are not responsible for any damage to mounts that have used these techniques. *****