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ASPECTS CONCERNING TAXIDERMY OF THE HEAD IN DEER (*Capreolus capreolus*)

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Abstract

Taxidermy is the art of dissecting and preserving animals as natural as possible, in order to exhibit them in natural science museums and in individual collections as trophies of the collectors or as decorating objects. In naturalization, minor surgical procedures for changing the mimics of the face are necessary in order to increase the value of the exhibits. The aim of the current work was to improve the technique of taxidermy in order to create valuable exhibits. Based on the bibliographic research and analysing the already existing pieces from different natural science museums and private collections, we noticed that technical improvements, especially of the facial region, were required in naturalizing the trophies coming from large mammals. The study was conducted on two deer heads. The naturalization was obtained by dissecting and removing the skin, excepting the ears, eye lids and oral cavity, where special procedures were required. The used method was systematic skinning. Tanning was made with eulan which insures a high flexibility and durability of the skin. The two prepared exhibits had an increased storage rate because there was no source of food for insects that could damage the material. With the improvement of naturalization technique of the exhibit, its storage life was also increasing. Application of new techniques of conservation and the use of new materials available in taxidermy, offers a long-term economic value to the exhibits in terms of structure and preservation of tissues.

Key words*: exhibits, naturalization, trophy, taxidermy, deer.*

INTRODUCTION

Taxidermy is the art of preparing/arranging the skin and it represents the art of body reconstruction with the aim of its public or private presentation in natural science museums or hunting collections. For naturalizing a large mammal species it is necessary to have good anatomical and biological knowledge and background, but not lastly to show plenty of patience, skill and mastery of some specific elements of taxidermy (Fehér, 1971). This is the reason for which taxidermy it is not just a simple process of conservation, it is a very complex art that can be realised by a reduced number of people. The persons that are working in this field need to comply with legislation, the most important law being Law 407/2006 of Hunters and hunting fond protection. This law is targeting only animals allowed to be hunted. In naturalization a primary importance has the development of small surgeries especially in the head and face mimic that finally gives a greater value to exhibits (Paştea et al., 1987). Taxidermy can be defined as the art of naturalization of animals for their exposure to natural science museums or in private collections of passionate people and also for those who use these exhibits as ornaments of the buildings (Church, 2012).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current study was conducted on two deer heads coming from two cadavers that were donated to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Cluj-Napoca, by the County Association of Hunters and Anglers Cluj (Cluj AJVPS). The cadavers were maintained in the freezer for 3 months. The naturalization was obtained by dissecting and removing the skin, excepting the ears, the eyelids and oral cavity, where special procedures were required. The necessary materials were represented by: scalpel, forceps, scissors, smooth sawdust, gas, different size towels, cotton, needle, thread, wadding, cutting pliers. The used method was systematic skinning (Paştea, 1978).

In deer, due to the presence of horns, the skinning is realized by a dorsal median incision, starting from the witters to the frontal bone in between the horns. The incision has a "Y" shape and it follows the mane region (Fig.1). After skinning, the skin is washed multiple times with a commercial use detergent. Tanning was made with Eulan® SPA 01 which insures a high flexibility, malleability, mobility and durability of the skin. It also offers protection of the skin against insects.

To avoid wrinkled nose and ear region, auricular concha, alar cartilage and all the subcutaneous connective tissues were removed (Housekeeper, 1990). For realizing a very detailed reconstruction of the natural aspects of the exhibit, very high quality photos of the animal in his natural environment are necessary. By using these photos, we can reconstruct all the details regarding the mimics and the facial expression of the animal (Siebels, 1992).

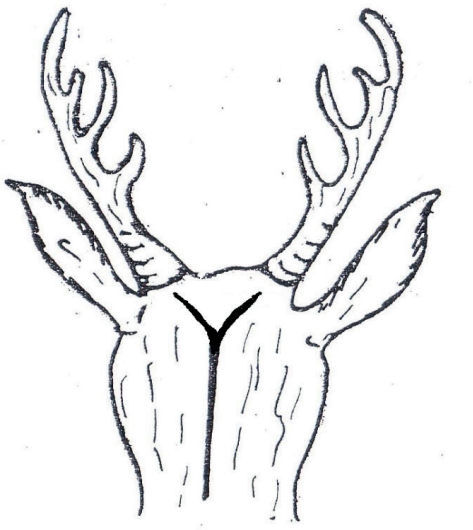

Figure 1 The "Y" shape incision from the witters to the horns

To imitate closely the natural mimics of the exhibit, ceramic clay implanted under the skin was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Using large mammals naturalization by removing all anatomical parts of the skin are obtained good quality exhibits with a closer natural look (Housekeeper, 1990). In general, the taxidermists use saline which assures a higher flexibility. Our method was improved, compared to the classical one and the obtained exhibits had a real high value, the most visible aspects being most close to natural. Another advantage of this method consists in the fact that it assures a higher flexibility, which is extremely important for the final result (Fehér, 1971). The two prepared exhibits had an increased storage rate because they do not represent a food source for insects that could damage the material. With the improvement of naturalization technique of the exhibit, its storage life was also increasing.

The use of Eulan® SPA 01 in taxidermy proved to be very efficient in our study, because it keeps away the insects. Due to this aspect, it increases the storage rate of the exhibit and last but not least, its economic and cultural value (Fig.2).

Figure 2 High quality visible aspects of the exhibit

CONCLUSIONS

In the case of large mammals is recommended naturalization of the head by removing all

anatomical parts of the skin, to achieve an exhibit with better quality and longer storage rate.

Application of new techniques of conservation and the use of new materials available in taxidermy, offered a long-term economic value to the exhibits in terms of structure and preservation of tissues.

A faithful reproduction of the wild animals face was obtained due to the use of images, pictures and drawings, as well as the performed maneuvers of reconstruction of the trophy. Use of Eulan® SPA 01 in order to remove harmful insects was effective and it assured a longer duration of use of the exhibit.

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