

Tailing

The tail skin when freed remains with the fur side facing outward. To ensure drying, the flesh side must be exposed. This reversing operation, termed tailing, is usually left until return to camp. A short length of stiff wire about 12 gauge is required (a bicycle spoke is excellent). Normal 6-gauge fencing wire can be used, but it is a little heavy. Cut off the tip of the tail, the exact length removed depending upon the thickness of the wire. Tuck in the end with the wire, then turn the tail inside out (see illustration on this page). Cut from the general skin opening back through the anus, continuing about 3/4 in. up the tail. Leave the skin in a cool place away from the fire until pegging can be done.

Stripping Skins off Boards

As routine procedure requires the removal of earlier skins from the drying boards before the current day's catch is pegged, directions are given here for stripping the boards before the pegging of skins is described. As skins remain on the drying boards for some 24 hours only, firing and hut temperature must be regulated to accomplish sufficient drying in this time.

On arrival back in camp, first take the skin boards down from the skin-board frame and stack them away from the fireplace. If the camp floor is earth or gravel, open out a chaff sack or some similar sacking and stack the boards on it with tail ends up. At this stage the fire can be lit without the dried skins becoming heated and so curling when removed from the boards.

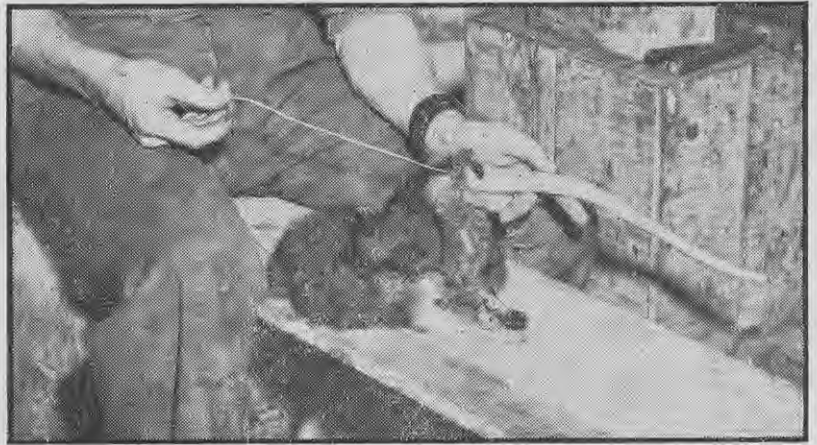
Take a claw hammer, and starting at the top (tail end), run the claw down the line of nails from the second nail to the bottom. In this way the pegging nails of each side can be removed with one or two runs of the hammer. Pull out the remainder of the nails; stack the skins in a convenient place ready for splitting the tails, with the boards in easy reach of the pegging boxes.

The pegging nails (where there is not a wooden floor) will be found collected on the sacking put down

SKINNING PROCEDURE

12. Without changing position, roll the skin down each hind leg and tear it off near the foot. 13. Rock the skin off to the base of the tail, working back up, by pulling alternately on the free ends of the leg skins. 14. Keeping the right foot on the body, place the left foot on one hind leg. Now remove the tail skin with a sharp pull on a heavy cord, which is fastened round the base of the tail by a noose formed in the bight of the rope. 15. Place the left foot on the body and pull the skin up toward the head. 16. Free the forelegs and continue right up the neck. 17. Place both thumbs upon the nose and lever the skin free of the head with the fingers and pull it right off. Shake and flick the skin to remove dirt and surplus fur. (If the fur is muddy it can first be washed in a creek at the camp. It should be drained before pegging or framing.)

TREATMENT OF SKINS



Tailing. The tip of the tail has been cut off and the fur is being turned inward with a bicycle spoke.

before starting work. They should be collected and returned to their box for further use.

Pegging Skins

If the highest grading is to be achieved, skins should conform to a fairly-uniform width (standard length is not so important), which is secured best by pegging skins on boards 36in. x 10in. x 3/4in. Both sides are used so that each board takes two skins. A large skin is taken to the edge of the board and any slight amount of slackness is taken up by allowing extra width. Discretion is needed in pegging medium and small skins, which should not be over-stretched in width, and the edge of the board should be used as a guide to ensure regularity of shape. Tails are pegged last.



Removing end pegging nails. The side nails have already been swept out.

A cobbler's hammer with the handle shortened and the face ground flat is the most suitable type for pegging.

Nails should merely be lightly tapped into place to ease withdrawal during stripping. When the skin has been pegged the pointed pieces and flanks should be trimmed, but a minimum of trimming should be done. The finished skin boards are suspended by two bent nails from the rope loops and staples of the skin board frames.

Tail Splitting

Lay the skin on a pegging board, insert the knife about 1in. from the base of the tail, and cut toward the head. Reverse the knife and cut back for the full length of the tail toward the tip. Open the tail out.

Airing Skins.

After the tails have been split hang the skins on the airing lines for at least 24 hours. Air them for a further 3 days or longer on short sticks or saplings each holding 25 to 30 skins. Thread the skins through ear holes, facing skin, to skin in pairs, and hang the bundles at the back of the camp before stacking them.

Stacking Skins

Stack the skins in pairs, facing skin surface to skin surface, on an extra bunk or in any warm dry place where they can be reasonably flat.



Order for tapping pegging nails into skin boards. Where numbers are not given the order is optional.