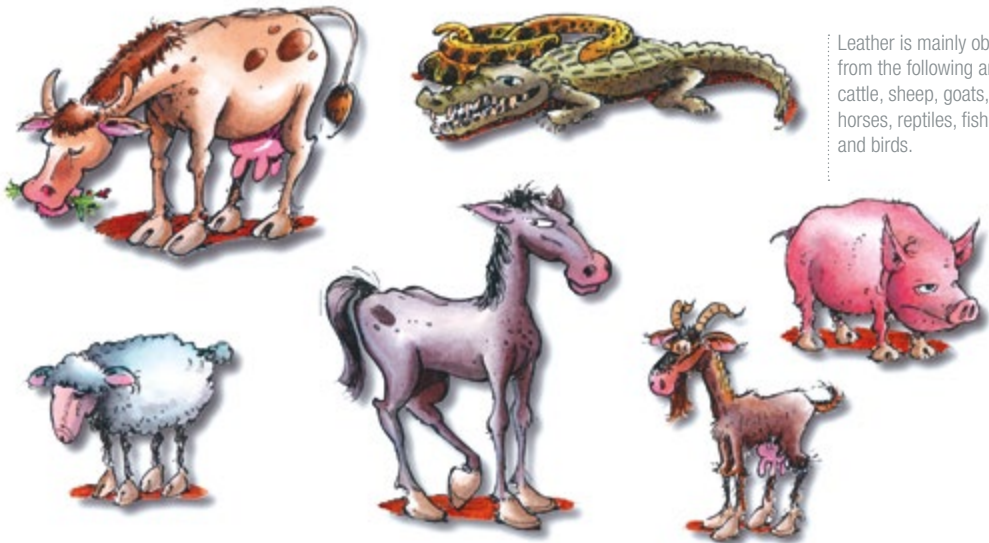




THE STORY OF LEATHER

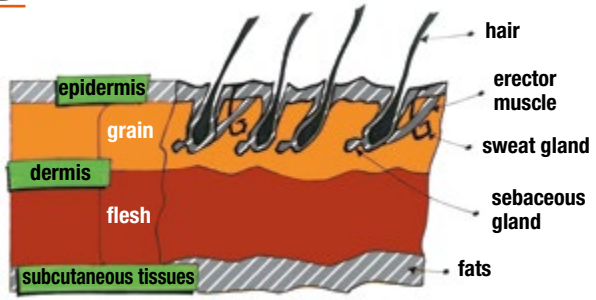


Leather is mainly obtained from the following animals: cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, reptiles, fishes and birds.

Leather is produced by transforming animal skin. The younger the animal, the better the quality of the skin, for it will have been subject to less damage (scratching, parasites, etc.). Tanners use chemicals and mechanical processes to produce finished leathers with various appearances and properties.

The structure of the hide

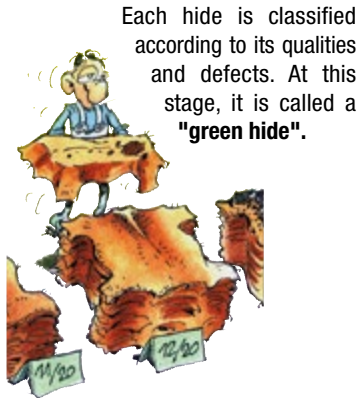
Parts of the skin eliminated during the tanning process.



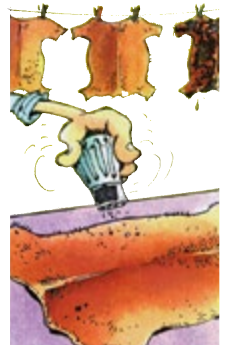
Flaying and preservation



At the slaughterhouse, the hide is separated from the carcass of the animal manually or removed mechanically. This operation is critical and requires skilled labour, so as to preserve the hide's qualities.



Each hide is classified according to its qualities and defects. At this stage, it is called a "green hide".



To ensure its preservation, the hide is salted or dried. At this stage, it is called a "raw hide".

Beamhouse



The **soaking** process consists in rehydrating salted or dried hides and eliminating preserving agents and impurities. The **unhairing** and **liming** processes eliminate, chemically, hairs and the epidermis through **scudding** or **rinsing**.

The **fleshing** process mechanically eliminates fat and flesh residues.



Delimiting is the last beamhouse operation; it prepares the skin for tanning by neutralization.

Tanning

The **tanning** operation transforms the hide into **leather** by treating it with **tanning agents (tannins)** that make it rot-proof.



Tanning agent: chrome tanning salts or vegetable tannins provide the leather with specific qualities.

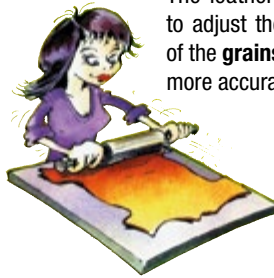
The **leather**, that has simply been tanned, **is sorted** according to its qualities and defects. At this stage, it may already be marketed.

Dressing and Finishing

The **dressing** and **finishing** operations transform tanned **leather** into **finished leather**. Equal thickness is obtained by splitting the leather into two layers: the **grain** (upper side) and the split (flesh side).



The leather is **shaved** to adjust the thickness of the **grains** and **splits** more accurately.



Retannage, dyeing and **fat liquoring** give the leather its colour, feel and softness.

The leather is dried by circulating hot air in dryers, using paste **drying** or vacuum drying.



After **samming** the leather is stretched in the **setting-out** process.



Buffing is used to obtain different types of leather: **nubuck, suede** or **corrected grain**.



The **staking** process is designed to soften the dried leather.



Hot plating consists in smoothing the surface of leather by subjecting it to high pressure against a heated and polished plate.

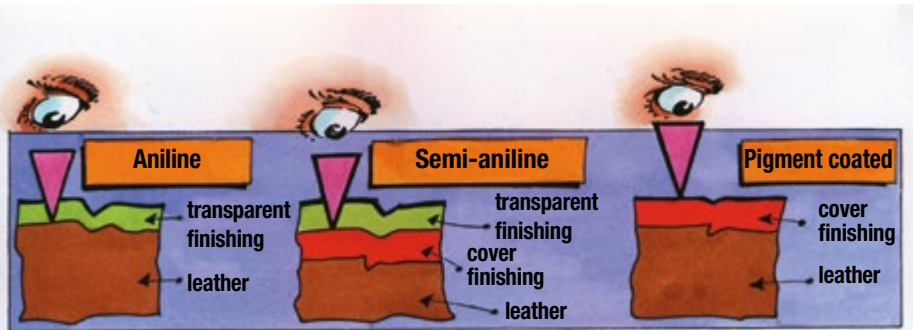


The leather is **finished** in one of two operations, either **spraying or padding**.



Embossing creates a raised design on a leather surface, imitating the skin of certain animals (e.g. reptiles) or the original appearance of the skin.

The three types of finishing



Aniline finishing emphasises the natural appearance of the leather surface by coating it with a transparent product: fine-looking aspect requires to be properly cared for.

Semi-aniline finishing covers the leather surface with layers of slightly opaque pigments which are themselves covered with a transparent film.

Pigment finishing (pigment coat) covers the leather surface with layers of opaque pigments that colour it. High degree of water and stain resistance. Easy-care material.