



Raw hide quality

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Introduction

Leather is a « special » raw material. Its value is for a large part determinate by its aspect, touch and finishing. More and more, leather market demand is for natural and high quality leather. Quality leather is primarily defined by the absence of damage to the skin surface. But most faults are not revealed until after the hair has been removed. At this stage, material has been partially processed by the tanner.

World-wide recognized for the quality of raw material and the quality of the article produced, French tannery transforms more than 600 000 calfskins every year.

But unfortunately for a few years, raw hide's quality is decreasing.

A study conducted by CTC in conjunction with the French leather industry has shown that majority of raw hide's defects are preventable by easy actions and using basic good practices.

Method

The objective of this study called “opération pilote veaux 2010” was to reduce:

- Ringworm by vaccinating
- Lice and parasites by adapted treatment of whole calves at the beginning of the farm period
- Scratches and open defects by removal of all mechanical defects sources

This operation was done in 2010 in 4 farms on about 1 000 calves.

The skins of these 1 000 animals were compared to 180 skins issued from calves only vaccinated against ringworm (no lice and parasites treatment – no removal of mechanical defects sources).

All the skins were identified from farm to slaughterhouse and then to tannery.

The quality (ringworm and lice defects, scratches) was evaluated after chrome tanning (in wet-blue).

Results

Lot “TEMOIN” only vaccinated against ringworm	180 calves
Lot “opération pilote 2010” n° 1	276 calves
Lot “opération pilote 2010” n° 2	310 calves
Lot “opération pilote 2010” n° 3	198 calves
Lot “opération pilote 2010” n° 4	203 calves

Table 1

We'll find in table 2 the results of the experience.



	Lot "témoin" 180	Lot n°1 276	Lot n°2 310	Lot n°3 198	Lot n°4 203
Skins with lice defects	32%	6%	4%	1%	<1%
Skins with ringworm damages	4%	<1%	3%	0	<1%
Skins with mechanical defects scratches	79,4%	24,1%	21,3%	17,7%	29,1%
% of skins without defects	10%	71%	71%	78%	68%

Table 2
Quality evaluation in wet-blue

This study shows that: it is possible to improve in great proportions the quality of calfskins and to reduce ringworm damages by vaccination and lice defects by appropriate treatments.

We have shown it's possible to reduce scratches and mechanical faults too.

After inspection in farm and removal of all the mechanical defects sources, and then using better farm practices, the quantity of skins without defects grows up from 10% to 70% or more.

First selection in tannery was less than 10% on the skins issued from standard lot. In the experience, quantity of leather classified in 1st selection was about 30%.

To improve the quality of raw hides in a lasting way, we have now to educate, to communicate these results (through leaflets, through agricultural shows talking with farmers, through veterinary conferences...).

But overall, it's necessary to identify hides and skins from farm to tannery, to evaluate the quality improvement, and study the way to give an incentive to those in the chain that are making the best for the quality.

CTC is now studying methods of tagging or marking the hides.