

Footwear Exchange



A platform of people worldwide who make the footwear, leather and allied industry work.

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the
footprint

monthly newsletter by Footwear Exchange



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Footprint June Edition is Launched!

As we approach Eid-ul-Adha in June, one of the most significant religious festivals in Bangladesh, the leather sector stands at a crucial juncture. This occasion, beyond its spiritual and cultural importance, also plays a vital economic role—particularly for the raw hide and skin supply chain. Each year, a major portion of the country's annual raw material for leather production is sourced during this time, making it a defining period for downstream industries including tanning, leather goods, and footwear.

In this edition, we turn our attention to the raw material base of the sector. From sustainable temporary preservation techniques to market insights and export performance, this issue captures the critical importance of Eid to the industry. As the season unfolds, ensuring proper hide management and preservation will be key to maximizing value. We hope this edition supports timely awareness and action across the value chain.

Alongside this, we bring you the latest export trends, sector insights, and industry updates—from factory floors to boardrooms. As the sector navigates both opportunity and volatility, timely information and coordinated efforts remain key.

We hope this newsletter provides useful insights and inspires continued growth and collaboration within our industry

Let's continue exchanging ideas and embracing opportunities for growth.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

INSIDE

Page 2-3

Curing: Temporary Preservation of Raw Hides and Skins



Page 4

Rawhide Price Update 2025 Eid Ul Adha

Page 5

Protest Against Rawhide Export Decision

Page 6-7

Shaping a Career in Leather Engineering



Eid-ul-Adha is not only a sacred religious occasion but also the single most significant annual event for Bangladesh's leather sector. Millions of animals are sacrificed nationwide, yielding a vast volume of raw hides and skins. These materials are critical to the leather industry, but their value can be lost within hours if not properly preserved. Short-term preservation—or curing—is essential to prevent putrefaction before the hides and skins reach the tannery. This article outlines the types of short-term preservation methods that are practical, effective, and vital for anyone involved in hide collection—be it households, NGOs, traders, or local mosque.



Putrefaction: The Hidden Threat to Raw Hides and Skins

putrefaction of raw hides and skins means the decay of protein and other hide materials due to bacterial action. So long as an animal is alive, the life force of animal saves the hide and skin from proteolytic bacterial attack. This bacteriological conversion of protein and other hide materials to different organic compounds is called putrefaction of raw hides and skins.

Why Curing Matters

Raw hides and skins are composed of protein-rich tissue that begins to decay rapidly due to microbial and enzymatic activity. In the hot, humid post-Eid weather of Bangladesh, this process can begin within 5–6 hours. **Curing halts decomposition** by removing moisture, neutralizing bacteria, and stabilizing the collagen structure—the core of good-quality leather. If done correctly, temporary curing preserves the economic value of the raw material and ensures quality downstream in tanning and leather production.

1. Dry Salting – The Most Widely Used Method

Salting is the most common and practical method of curing in Bangladesh.

How it Works:

- Use clean, coarse salt—around 40–50% of the hide's weight.
- Spread salt evenly on the flesh side of the hide.
- Stack hides flesh-to-flesh, avoiding excessive compression.
- Store in a cool, shaded area for 5 to 10 days.

Benefits:

- ✓ Inexpensive and accessible
- ✓ Can preserve hides for several weeks
- ✓ Retains leather-making quality

Precautions:

- Never use fine grain salt or dirty salt.
- Remove blood, dirt, dung, and fat before salting.
- Don't stack too many hides together—this blocks air and causes rotting.

2. Wet Salting – Useful in High Heat and Humidity

This method involves mixing salt with a small amount of water to make a paste.

How it Works:

- Apply the **salt-water paste** thickly on the flesh side.
- Let it cure for **3 to 5 days**.

Best Used When:

- ✓ Ambient temperature is high
- ✓ Quick salt penetration is needed
- ✓ Hides will be transported soon

3. Sun Drying – A Traditional, Low-Cost Option

Drying is simple and doesn't require salt, making it suitable for remote or low-resource settings.

How it Works:

- Clean and stretch hides flat, ideally **under shade** or indirect sunlight.
- Leave for **3–5 days** until fully dried.

Limitations:

- Thick hides may not dry uniformly.
- Overexposure to sunlight may make hides **brittle and hard**.
- Dry hides are more difficult to process in tanneries.

Source: Ref. Book of SS Dutta, Picture from TBS

4. Brine Curing – For Large-Scale or Controlled Environments

Brine curing uses **saltwater baths** (sodium chloride solution) to soak hides.

How it Works:

- Prepare a **brine solution (18–25% salt)**.
- Soak hides for **12–24 hours**, then drain and stack for storage.

Advantages:

- ✓ Quick penetration
- ✓ Even distribution
- ✓ Reduces salt waste

Limitations:

Requires containers or tanks and proper disposal systems.



5. Concrete Mixer Curing – Fast & Efficient for Mass Collection

An innovative approach being adopted by large NGOs and hide collectors.

How it Works:

- Load **hides and salt** (40–50% of hide weight) into a **concrete mixer**.
- Rotate for **5–10 minutes**, ensuring even salt coverage.
- Stack and store as usual.

Why It's Effective:

- ✓ Saves time
- ✓ Ensures uniform salt application
- ✓ Reduces labor

Ideal for urban centers, district-level collection hubs, or cooperative organizations

6. Chilling or Freezing – Rare but Effective

Chilling (-2°C to 4°C) and deep-freezing (-20°C) preserve hides for extended periods.

Use Cases:

- ✓ High-value skins (e.g., goat or sheep)
- ✓ Exporters or industrial processors

Limitations:

- **Expensive**
- Requires **cold storage infrastructure**
- Not viable for mass post-Eid use

Best Practices During Korboni Eid

- **Start curing within 2–4 hours** after flaying
- Avoid **plastic bags**—they trap moisture
- Train volunteers in proper **cleaning and salting**
- Encourage local mosques to set up **curing stations**
- Coordinate with **tanneries or hide traders** for prompt collection

Every year, **20–30% of sacrificial hides** are wasted in Bangladesh due to poor preservation. With better awareness, local engagement, and the use of practical curing methods like **dry salting, brine curing, and concrete mixer salting**, this wastage can be significantly reduced.

By ensuring timely and correct curing, communities can protect the value of these hides, support the national leather sector, and minimize environmental harm.



Source :Ref. Book of SS Dutta

Eid-ul-Azha 2025 Rawhide Price Update – Bangladesh government Raises Rates

The government of Bangladesh has increased rawhide prices for Eid-ul-Azha 2025, aiming to ensure better returns for sacrificial animal hides and improve the raw material flow into Bangladesh’s leather industry.

Revised Rawhide Prices:

Cowhide (Dhaka): Tk 65/sqft (up from Tk 60)

Cowhide (Outside Dhaka): Tk 55–60/sqft (up from Tk 50–55)

Goat – Khashi: Tk 22–27/sqft (up from Tk 20–25)

Goat – Bakri: Tk 20–22/sqft (up from Tk 18–20)

Minimum per-piece cowhide price:
Dhaka: Tk 1,350
Outside Dhaka: Tk 1,150



📈 In 2024, the cowhide per-piece price was Tk 1,200 in Dhaka and Tk 1,000 outside.

While the upward adjustment is a positive step, traders remain concerned about salt availability, which is critical for rawhide preservation in the days following Eid.

As we prepare for the upcoming Eid season, this pricing move brings hope for better value realization — but coordinated efforts across the supply chain are crucial to ensure proper preservation, fair trade, and industry benefit.

👉 A reminder: even a small hide can have big value — for the economy, for livelihoods, and for the leather sector’s sustainability.

Source: The Financial Express, Commerce Ministry



Protest Against Rawhide Export Decision

A wave of protest has swept across the leather sector following the government's decision to allow rawhide exports during Eid-ul-Azha 2025. Key industry bodies have voiced serious concern, warning that the move could disrupt domestic supply and damage the country's value-added leather industry.

Bangladesh Tanners Association (BTA) Chairman Shaheen Ahmed strongly opposed the decision, stating that rawhides are a value-added product and should be processed domestically. He warned that allowing exports could leave the country's tanneries without sufficient raw material, putting the Tk 10,000 crore investment in the sector at serious risk

Leading the protest are several major organizations, including:

- ◆ Bangladesh Finished Leather, Leather Goods and Footwear Exporters Association
- ◆ Chamra Shilpo Songslishto 13 Songthoner Netribrindo
- ◆ Tannery Workers Union
- ◆ Kacha Chamra Arottdar Somiti
- ◆ Leather Engineers and Technologists Society Bangladesh

These groups argue that rawhides are critical raw materials for local value addition and that exporting them in raw form could jeopardize **tannery operations, job security, and industry investment**. Demonstrations and press briefings highlight the collective demand to **reconsider the export decision** and safeguard the future of Bangladesh's leather sector.



Source: The Daily Star & Footwear Professionals group



For students passionate about science, engineering, and the growing world of sustainable fashion and manufacturing, leather engineering offers a rewarding and specialized career. After completing the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), aspiring leather engineers in Bangladesh have two primary pathways.

The first is through the **University of Dhaka**, where students must sit for the **'A Unit' admission test** (science group). Successful candidates can then be eligible by their merit position and opt for one of three specialized undergraduate programs at the **Institute of Leather Engineering and Technology (ILET)**:

- Leather Engineering
- Leather Products Engineering
- Footwear Engineering

These programs are located in Hazaribagh, Dhaka, and are part of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology. Each subject offers a unique perspective on the leather industry—from raw material processing to finished goods manufacturing and innovation in footwear technology.

The second path is through **Khulna University of Engineering & Technology (KUET)**, one of the leading engineering universities in the country. Here, Eligible students after admission test can pursue a **Bachelor of Science in Leather Engineering**. KUET offers strong technical training with a focus on leather processing and tannery management.



Diverse Career Opportunities for Leather Engineers:

A degree in leather engineering opens the door to a wide range of technical, managerial, and creative roles across the leather and footwear industry. Here's how this specialized knowledge gives leather engineers a unique advantage:

◆ **Merchandising** – Involves coordinating with buyers, managing timelines, and monitoring order execution. Since merchandising is essentially like managing a full project, a leather engineer understands each phase of product making them highly effective in this role. Future roles can lead to the full factory project management in leading role like CEO, CMO and towards an entrepreneurship.

◆ **Production & Planning** – Supervises manufacturing activities in tanneries or factories. Leather engineers are trained in the entire production process, including machine operation, material behavior, and chemical applications, which helps ensure efficiency and problem-solving on the factory floor. Future roles can lead to GM, AGM and sometimes technical expertise led them to achieve buyer's role globally.

◆ **Product Development** – Combines design, research, pattern-making, and prototyping. Leather engineers bring both technical expertise and material science knowledge to ensure new products are innovative, functional, and manufacturable. Future role can lead them to Product Engineer, technical director as well as leading role in international fashion industry.

◆ **Quality Assurance (QA)** – Ensures that products meet defined quality and safety standards. Leather engineers study product evaluation, defect analysis, and quality control systems during their education, enabling them to detect and resolve quality issues effectively. A very attractive role to work as a Leading representative of buyer in future as well as leading roles in different third-party inspections & Multinational Testing Labs etc.

◆ **Supply Chain Management** – Oversees sourcing, logistics, and inventory. A background in leather engineering gives professionals insight into material handling and critical path management. Its a potential career as a future role as Strategic buyer, Global supply chain director, Even country director of multinationals etc.

◆ **Leather Technologist in Tanneries** – Focuses on raw hide processing, chemical application, and sustainable tanning. Leather engineers are experts in hide preservation, wet-end and finishing processes, and the science of leather transformation. Future roles can lead to innovation, leather scientist and Environmental sector.

◆ **Retail Collection & Chain Management:** With the rise of local and regional footwear and leather brands, many have established retail collection chains across the country. Leather engineers can build a career in managing these collections — overseeing product assortment, seasonal launches, customer trends, and inventory flow. Their technical knowledge helps align design with material feasibility and market demand. Career growth can lead to roles such as Chief Collection Manager, Retail Head, or even Global Retail Director for international chains.

◆ **Sourcing Specialists** – Work with global brands or buying houses to identify and procure leather or footwear components. Leather engineers offer technical insight into product specs and supplier evaluation, which is often missing in general sourcing professionals. Future roles offer overseas jobs as well as exploring global sourcing.

◆ **Entrepreneurship** – Many graduates establish their own businesses in footwear, leather goods, or chemical supply. Their holistic understanding of materials, markets, and manufacturing as well as a good networking through the community helps them build sustainable and competitive ventures. As an entrepreneurs right now a lot of Leather engineers are sharing their products globally.

◆ **Higher Studies** – Opens doors to post-graduate studies in Chemical Engineering, Polymer Science, or Environmental Science, Sustainable technology, Product Management etc enhancing prospects in research or academic careers.

◆ **Government Jobs** – Opportunities in Department of Livestock Services, Bangladesh Leather Research Institute, DTIEWTPVL, BSTI, Export Promotion Bureau, and other public institutions, where technical leather knowledge is in demand for regulatory, quality, and development roles.

Challenges in the Career Path:

While leather engineering offers exciting opportunities, it also comes with some challenges:

⚠ **Limited Female Representation** – Despite growing inclusivity, the working conditions in tanneries and industrial plants may not always feel welcoming for women, especially in core production roles.

⚠ **Factory Locations** – Many production units are in remote industrial zones which may require long commutes or relocation, especially challenging for those from urban areas.

⚠ **Health and Safety Concerns** – Leather processing often involves chemicals and heavy machinery, requiring proper safety training and precautions to maintain a healthy work environment.

⚠ **Industry Fluctuations** – The leather sector is affected by global trends, trade restrictions, and environmental regulations, which can create uncertainty in job demand and factory operations.

⚠ **Slow Career Growth in Some Segments:** In certain areas like small-scale factories and tradings, growth may be slow due to fewer leadership roles or hierarchical bottlenecks.

A career in leather engineering is an opportunity to stand at the intersection of innovation, sustainability, and industry.

As Bangladesh strengthens its position in the global leather market, the demand for skilled, forward-thinking leather engineers is only set to grow. Around 200 students graduate every year from this unique department against the vast demand, creating long-term opportunities. So leather engineering is a promising and impactful career choice in Bangladesh.



Image Source: Social media page of ILET and Engineers diary, LE, KUET

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