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Book Review

From collagen to leather—the theoretical background

Author: Prof. Dr. G. Reich, Freiberg, Germany

On behalf of various BASF authors:

Dr T.Taeger, BASF, Germany

Produced by: BASF Service Centre, Germany, 2007.

This is a long awaited text book that addresses key technical issues with the objective of a better and clearer understanding of the leather making process. Although the matters addressed are complex, they are approached in a clear and logical way.

Various scientists and leather technologists made a number of studies during 2001 and 2002 at BASF. Five of these studies have now been brought together as Chapters and published in this book. They are self-contained and can be read independently of each other. All of the studies essentially focus on processes that involve collagen.

Chapter 1: What is leather? The structure and reactivity of collagen—summarises current knowledge concerning the structure and reactivity of collagen, in particular Type 1 collagen, in the context of leather production.

Chapter 2: Physical and chemical processes on collagen and its transformation into the leather matrix—covers the diffusion and bonding processes in which collagen is involved, and takes a quantitative approach rarely seen in the past. It deals with physical and chemical processes on collagen during the production of leather and its transformation into the leather matrix.

Chapter 3: The theory of tanning—past, present, future—contains a critical appraisal of the theory of tanning in terms of the historical perspective, present situation, and future developments of the theory.

Chapter 4: The significance of water for the structure and properties of collagen and leather and for the processes of leather manufacture. This section is particularly comprehensive, as the key role of water has often been overlooked. Not only is water a crosslinking agent that stabilises the structure of collagen, but it acts as a plasticiser, and together with collagen form an integrated structure. It determines many different properties of leather, and is the solvent employed in wet processing.

Chapter 5: The utilisation of collagen-containing residues of the leather production process—recognises that only approximately fifty percent of the collagen finds its way into leather. Accordingly, it is sensible to look for ways to make commercial use of collagen and its derivatives, and this chapter deals with the use of collagen from tannery byproducts in the context of the current statutory regulations. 🌐

Book Review

The Crocodile Skin

Author: Karlheinz Fuchs

Publisher: Andreas S.Brahm, Hedderheimer Landstrabe 20,
60439 Frankfurt am Main

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Karlheinz Fuchs first published 'Die Krokodilhaut' in 1974, one year before the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) came into force. His belief that identification of crocodilian skins down to species and even sub-species would become important, to both commercial and non-commercial interests, has been well borne out by subsequent events.

Central to the ability to control international trade under CITES is the ability to identify skins in trade. In this context 'Die Krokodilhaut' remains a classic and important publication. However, the need for improved identification tools is an ongoing one, and it is in this context that the updated version of the original work was undertaken, then republished in English.

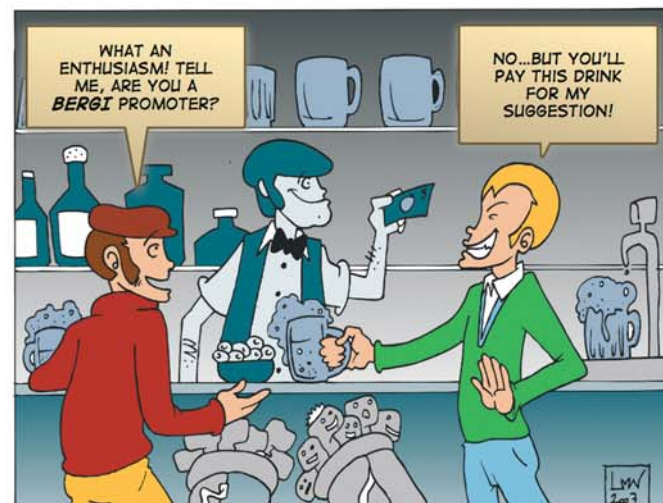
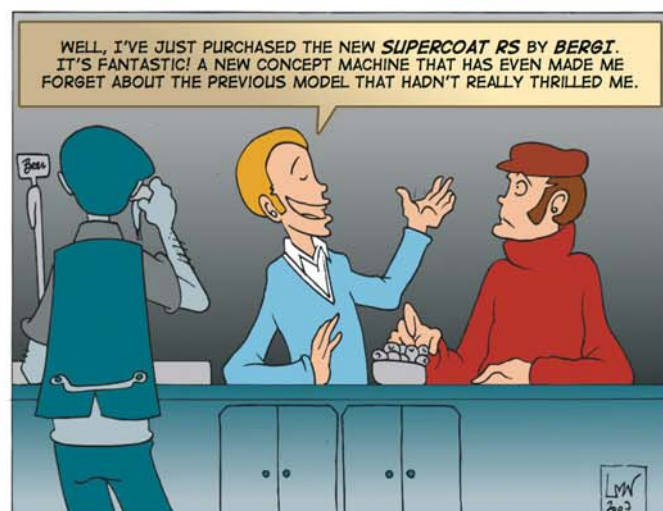
This amended and revised edition—*The Crocodile Skin: important characteristics in identifying Crocodilian species*—will assist the identification of species and sub-species and enforcement at all levels: that is export and import, and within tanning and manufacturing facilities. For customs officers at point of export, import and re-export, this book will allow preliminary determinations to be made, based on key characteristics described and illustrated in this book.

Over and above the introduction to the book, the following subjects are given detailed coverage:

- Materials and methods of identification
- Histology and microscopic anatomy of the crocodilian skin
- Key to the identification of crocodilian belly skins
- Identification of crocodilian species

In the chapter on identification of crocodilian species, the description of each species/sub-species is extraordinarily precise and clear. Photographs taken of both the grain and flesh side of the crocodilian skins support each description.

Karlheinz Fuchs is a remarkable figure who has gained a worldwide reputation within both the leather industry and as a longstanding member of the Crocodile Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission of the IUCN-World Conservation Union. This book will become standard text for those with interests in taxonomy, anatomy and all aspects of manufacture and trade in crocodilian skins. 🐊



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