

# Directions for Preparing Bucktails for Fly Tying

By cleaning and preserving your own bucktails you can save money and end up with high quality tying materials. The following steps are recommended for cleaning and preserving your tails.

1. Inspect the tail to see if it is worth cleaning and saving. The best time to do this is when the tail is fresh as it is easier to work with. By fresh I mean that it should be de-boned and cleaned as soon as possible after harvest. You can keep them where it is cold or put them in a freezer.
2. De-bone the tail by cutting down the middle of the tail and opening the skin up so it can be cleaned and the fat scraped off. Using your knife scrape the skin to remove all excess fat.
3. Wash the deer tails in a multi-purpose antibacterial and degreasing detergent. Let them soak for about 10 minutes or more. Then rinse the tails in clean water, and give them a second rinse in another pail of clean water.
4. Go outside and shake the water out of the tails. Then blot them with a paper towel to remove excess water. The tails will not be dry after doing this... you just want to remove excess water.
5. Rub borax into the skin of the tails leaving some excess borax on the skin.
6. The tails can then be left to dry. It works good to place them on a fluorescent light fixture grid (cubed light deflector), and then place another grid over the top as this allows good air flow and they dry faster. This is not necessary and they can be placed on any flat surface and turned once a day while drying.
7. Take a shop vac and vacuum excess borax off the tails. You can then place them in a suitable place for storage. Mission accomplished.

Note: I have deer tails that were prepared like this 25 to 30 years ago and they are still in good shape. You will save between \$4.00 to \$5.00 per tail and usually end up with better quality tails.