



The AURI report outlines the steps in the tanning process and the waste or byproducts it produces.

Putting Waste Hides To Work

If you need to dispose of animal hides, the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA-AMS) have suggestions. Their report, "Sustainable Uses for Animal Hides and Byproducts," covers everything from preservation to composting, as well as extracting collagen, gelatin and other materials.

The 2 1/2-year research effort focused on small meat and poultry processors in the Upper Midwest and their challenges with hides. These challenges included financial barriers, the need for technical assistance, business development support, and solutions to overcome them. The project explored ways to strengthen industry resilience and develop practical solutions, with the goal of creating a regional pilot that could be replicated nationwide.

Much of the report offers little value to small processors due to the technology or costs required. However, entrepreneurs seeking opportunities may find useful ideas.

Hides today represent only one percent of an animal's value. Reduced demand for leather and the cost of disposal have made

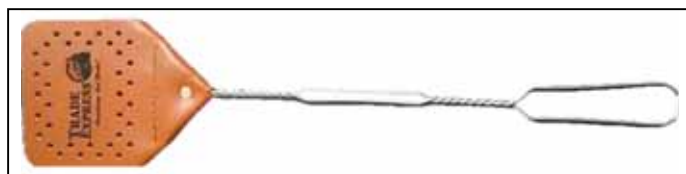
hides a cost center rather than a profit center. Imperfections, such as branding marks and exposure to the elements, can result in rejects. Rising processing costs also have an impact.

A 2020 study by the Leather Hide Council of America noted that of the 33 million cattle slaughtered, 14.5% of hides ended up in landfills or burned. Even tanned hides produce trimmings and byproducts like hair.

The AURI report outlines the steps in the tanning process and the waste or byproducts it produces. It then explores a wide range of uses, from pet chews and snack foods to cosmetics and health care products.

The report's tier system is perhaps most useful for small processors or entrepreneurs looking for opportunities. Every potential use covered falls into either Tier I Easy Implementation, Tier II High Capital Applications or Tier III Community/Municipal Application. The latter includes larger-scale uses like waste-to-energy and gasification.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, AURI, 510 County Rd. 71, Suite 120, Crookston, Minn. 56716 (ph 218-281-7600; communications@auri.org; www.auri.org; www.auri.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/AURI-Report-SustainableUses_09_revise.pdf).



Each fly swatter (4 1/8 in. wide and 18 3/8 in. long) is made in Ohio from genuine leather.

They Make Custom Leather Fly Swatters

Creekside Creatives specializes in custom engravings on wholesale gifts and business promotion items. "We're a small company located in Southern Indiana," says Creekside Creatives representative Darwin Knepp. "We got our start in February 2020. I've always wanted to own my own business; I'd worked for another laser engraving company for several years and enjoyed the work. So, we gave it a try."

The company makes it possible to gift personalized items with custom laser-engraved products, including leather fly swatters. Each fly swatter (4 1/8 in. wide and 18 3/8 in. long) is made in Ohio from genuine leather, leading to natural variations in color between products. "The fly swatter's high-quality leather ends ensure they don't tear like regular ones, and the metal handle prevents it

from breaking," says Knepp. "Best of all, you can engrave the leather and advertise for your company long after you've given the swatter away." All prices include a logo or text on one side (coolers are the exception; personalization costs extra). Pricing varies based on the number of swatters you order, starting at \$11.95 per swatter and dropping to \$8.37 for orders of 500 or more.

Leather fly swatters are just the beginning. Creekside Creatives also sells drinkware, leather accessories, home goods, office supplies and personal products. Custom logos and artwork can be uploaded for engraving on almost every product.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Creekside Creatives, 8084 E 625 N, Montgomery, Ind. 47558 (ph 812-444-9784; info@creeksidewholesale.com; www.creeksidewholesale.com).



"This qualifies as a supervised agriculture experience for students in the FFA program," Parker says.

FFA Coffee Roasters Turn A Profit

FFA students at Aiken High School in Cincinnati, Ohio, manage a profitable coffee cart that keeps the entire school caffeinated.

"Awaken at Aiken" was founded by ESL teacher Aaron Parker.

"We have students from 50 countries," he says. "They speak over 40 languages."

Many Aiken students are new to the U.S. school system. They've often fled poverty, war, genocide and other challenges in their home countries, and require intensive English-language support.

Parker received a grant for use with students with limited English skills and used it as seed money for coffee roasting equipment.

"Coffee is international, and so are our students," he says. "We wanted to connect students to the coffee grown specifically in their homes."

That was eight years ago. Now, the Awaken at Aiken coffee cart travels the halls every school morning and appears for special school events. FFA students arrive early to grind and brew the coffee, preparing it for sale before the first class.

"This qualifies as a supervised agriculture experience for students in the FFA program," Parker says. "It's not an excuse to miss their core classes."

Roasting happens on Saturdays at a community partner location.

"We've never had a problem getting volunteers."

Each cup is sold for \$2, and they typically go through two gallons over the school day.

"We stop brewing in the afternoon not to waste any product," Parker says.

The coffee varieties vary by day. Students can choose to roast and brew beans that originated in their homeland.

"We're buying some of the best coffee in the world. Lots of it is fair wage and fair trade. It's about the culture as much as the coffee. It's a celebration, really. So, we keep things pure and simple—just milk, sugar and coffee. It's about showing the essence of the coffee itself."

Other than the initial seed money, Awaken at Aiken is a self-sustaining business. All profits are reinvested in cups, beans and other supplies, and they've even raised \$10,000 in donations for student-chosen organizations, both local and international. Parker has found that the coffee business gives students both hard and soft skills.

"They also learn about GAP—Good Agricultural Practices. The product must be safe, so students learn how to handle food responsibly."

When asked about the biggest challenges of running Awaken at Aiken, Parker invited three students (Pawan Rai, Hemant Pradhan and Kumba Aochi) to comment.



Parker received a grant for use with students with limited English skills and used it as seed money for coffee roasting equipment.

"People throwing coffee on the ground is a problem," Rai said. "We're responsible for the mess."

"It's hard finding the right people to trust with the money," Pradhan added.

He explained there could be hundreds in the till at a time, and many students are still mastering how to make a change.

"We make it a best practice not to give coffee away to students, staff and even the principal because we're financially responsible for being a self-sustaining business," Parker says. "We've learned it's important to set hard boundaries. No IOUs, especially from teachers."

Still, the students had far more positive things to say about the program. They listed many perks, including opportunities to raise money for donations and scholarships, the chance to share culture through the origin of different coffee beans, making people happy in the morning, and the thrill of being part of a self-sustaining business.

"The students get it," Parker says. "We serve positivity and make people happy."

He believes the key to success has been focusing on the strengths and interests of students.

"Coffee is second only to oil in the global commodity market; it's very unifying, and it represents the cultures of so many of our students," he says. "Because we found something student-centered and important to students, they're invested in the success."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Aaron Parker (parkeaa@cpsboe.k12.oh.us).