

THE

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## 118th Annual Convention

May 21-23, 2024

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For more information go to:

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**REAL  
LEATHER.  
STAY  
DIFFERENT.**

# LEATHER BY NUMBERS:

## FACTS AND FIGURES FROM THE US LEATHER INDUSTRY AND BEYOND

Note: All figures as of January 2021 or latest available.

**ZERO** cattle are killed to make US leather. US hides have been valued at **JUST 1-2%** of a cow's total value for the last two years, which is why they are considered a by-product and often end up as waste. The average price per head of US cattle is \$2,000-2.200, while hides vary in price from **\$5 TO \$35 PER PIECE**, if sold at all. <sup>(1)</sup>

**330M** hides come from the meat and dairy industries around the world. Approximately **34M** were processed the US. <sup>(2)</sup> **AS MANY AS 2.4M US HIDES** ended up as landfill in 2019, this is **7%** of the national total.

Worldwide the waste figure is approximately **40%** or **132M** hides. With the average hide weighing 25Kg this means that **3M TONNES** are thrown away ever year.

Leather production turns more than **4.5M TONNES OF** potential waste, every year, into usable, durable goods. This saves **2.7M TONS OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS** from landfill sites. <sup>(3)</sup>

Production, processing and distribution of hides and leather products directly employs an estimated **5,486** individuals, who collectively earn more than **\$384M**. US exports of hides and leather was over **\$1.5BILLION** in 2021. <sup>(4)</sup>

The US exports approximately **95%** of all cattle hide and wet blue leather products it produces, worth **\$2.85BILLION**. <sup>(5)</sup>

Around **45%** of global leather production is used to make footwear, **22%** for clothing, bags and accessories, **18%** for car upholstery, and about **15%** for furniture. <sup>(6)</sup>

Water consumption for the production of leather from cattle hides has fallen by more than **35%** in the past 25 years, down from **60 CUBIC-METERS** per ton of hides to **38 CUBIC-METERS** per ton. US tanneries are required, by law, to connect to effluent treatment plants to prevent pollution. <sup>(7)</sup>

Leather will biodegrade in **LESS THAN 50 YEARS**. In contrast, it can take **500 YEARS** or more for synthetics, made from petrochemicals, to degrade. <sup>(8)</sup>

ReFed's conversion rate for food waste is for **EACH METRIC TON OF WASTE DISPOSAL** there is **9.8 7MT** of **CO2 EQUIVALENT** emitted. In this case, mostly as methane. <sup>(9)</sup>

This factsheet is produced by the Leather and Hide Council of America (L&HCA), established to promote the US leather industry which is responsible for a significant proportion of the international trade in hides. The L&HCA works to establish best practice in US leather production and to share this worldwide. Figures quoted refer to the USA unless otherwise stated.

### SOURCE:

- (1) <https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/rx913p88g/w0893g25p/5d86qb66f/1stk0223.pdf>
- (2) <https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/r207tp32d/pg15cj85z/hd76t466z/1san0422.pdf>
- (3) 2020 LHCA Infographic
- (4) John Dunham & Associates, Economic Impact of the Meat Industry (2016)
- (5) <https://thesustainabilityalliance.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/US-Hide-Skin-and-Leather-Factsheet-0420.pdf>
- (6) TBC
- (7) 2020 LHCA factsheet
- (8) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leather#:~:text=Leather%20biodegrades%20slowly%E2%80%94taking%2025,or%20more%20years%20to%20decompose>
- (9) <https://insights-engine.refed.org/impact-calculator?inputs=%207B%22sector%22%3A%22manufacturing%22%2C%22type%22%3A%22fresh-meat-seafood%22%2C%22unit%22%3A%22tons%22%2C%22alternative%22%3Afalse%2C%22destinations%22%3A%20%22key%22%3A%22refuse-discards%22%2C%22current%22%3A1%7D%5D%7D>

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*Proceedings, Reports, Notices, and News  
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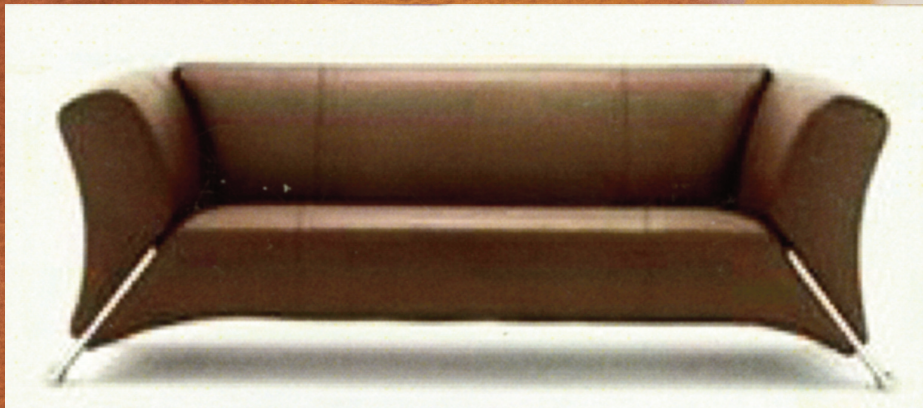
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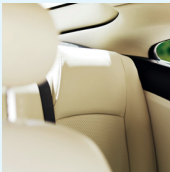
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With the rise of both electric and self-driving, cars are becoming quieter and anti-squeak and rattle materials are becoming increasingly important. At the same time, improved anti-stain performance is required, because of the current trend for pale-colored car seats. Therefore, we have developed Stay Clean. This low-VOC coating technology protects pale-colored leather and vinyl surfaces against common stains, such as dye from jeans, spilled coffee and dirt. Our solution also makes surfaces low-squeak, which is a great asset as global research has shown that a squeaking car interior is one of the biggest annoyances among car owners. Another trend in car interior is the popularity of matt surfaces. Therefore, we have developed PolyMatte®. This non-squeaking solution provides a luxurious feel to the finished article in combination with flexibility and scratch and abrasion resistance. Our portfolio contains many products, varying from beamhouse products, tanning systems to finishes,

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Hershey Lodge, Hershey Pennsylvania

May 21–24, 2024

If you have recently completed or will shortly be completing research studies relevant to hide preservation, hide and leather defects, leather manufacturing technology, new product development, tannery equipment development, leather properties and specifications, tannery environmental management, or other related subjects, you are encouraged to present the results of this research at the next annual convention of the Association to be held at the Hershey Lodge, Hershey Pennsylvania, May 21–24, 2024

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**Full Presentations are due by May 1, 2024**

They are to be submitted by e-mail to the  
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