

(continued from inside)

additives can cause permanent color loss. Even the type of home washer can cause a problem if its spin cycle is too aggressive. If the drying temperature is off by even just a little, shrinkage or stiffening of the skins may result.

Clearly a professional that has a practical depth of knowledge gained from doing this all the time will achieve the best results for washable suede. A favorable outcome is not just the result of proper washing techniques and additives, but what is done when finishing that garment. You can see a significant difference. Our leather specialist simply does it better.



The dye on this brown suede trim bled, staining the nearby fabric during the recommended method of cleaning.

**Leather trim and buttons covered with leather remain popular design additions.**

Sometimes these accent pieces cause problems because the leather dye, if not matched to withstand the care method on the label, can run or bleed onto the adjacent fabric. Even though we will test the dye before cleaning, if this happens there is no satisfactory remedy other than returning the item to the place of purchase.

**Imitation leather and suede can be difficult to distinguish from the real thing.** Sometimes, even using the most careful cleaning techniques, vinyl or urethane-based imitation leather or suede may be vulnerable to blistering, puckering, stiffening, or become sticky. When in doubt, let us take a look.

*Our leather specialists are very good and welcome the opportunity to provide all the care your leather garment deserves.*

## Routine Care of Your Leather & Suede

To keep your leather looking its best between cleanings and enhance its look and feel, remember these points. Always:

- ✓ Wear a scarf to protect the collar area from body oils and perspiration. Heavy staining of any kind and ground-in dirt are no friends of leather.
- ✓ Let leather air-dry away from heat if it gets wet.
- ✓ Keep it in a cool, ventilated area when you're not wearing it. Leather can dry out if exposed to dry heat, or mildew if stored in a hot, humid environment.
- ✓ Allow it to "breathe"—never leave your leather in a plastic bag.

## Choosing a Leather Garment

Purchasing a leather garment can be a major investment, so it is important to choose it carefully and care for it wisely. In selecting a leather garment:

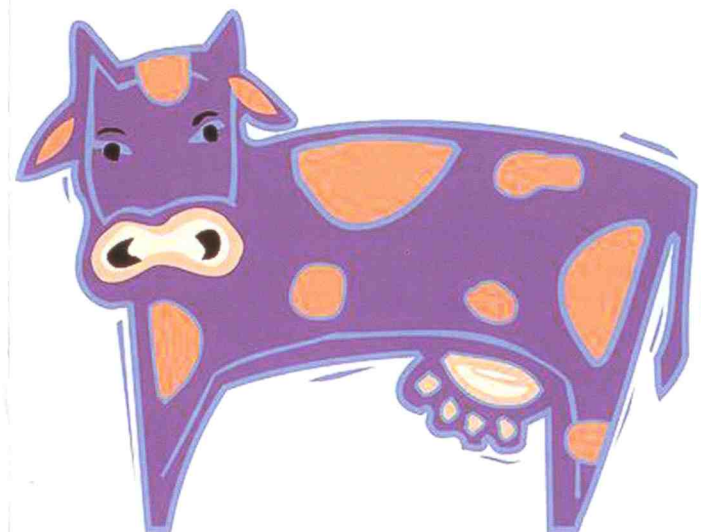
- ✓ Buy from a reputable retailer.
- ✓ Look for careful matching of colors and textures throughout the garment. Keep in mind, however, suede will never be completely uniform.
- ✓ Avoid a snug fit. Hides are stretched during tanning and some relaxation shrinkage can be expected in use and cleaning.
- ✓ Read and save accompanying care information.

*We appreciate and value your business.*



14700 Sweitzer Lane  
Laurel, MD 20707  
Tel. 301.622.1900  
[www.ifi.org](http://www.ifi.org)

# ALL ABOUT LEATHER & SUEDE



## Have you ever seen a purple cow?

**A CONSUMER GUIDE FROM YOUR  
IFI GARMENT CARE PROFESSIONAL**

# LEATHER & SUEDE

Chances are you have never seen a purple cow. Yet, the leather garments you wear are hides that have been colored dark brown, black, blue, red, white, and yes, even purple.

## Wear and Care

You invested in leather because it looks good and you look good in it. To keep it that way, CLEAN IT EVERY YEAR. We have a leather specialist that knows how to best clean and restore your leather garment. Always clean all matching items at the same time. If staining occurs, bring it to us as soon as possible. *Do not* try to remove spots yourself. Because we are very good at what we do, if there are warning signs about a particular garment, we'll take time to advise you before proceeding.

Remember, we're talking about a natural animal hide, not a piece of cotton material, so even with the latest and best care technologies, some change of appearance can result. We make it a habit to underpromise and overdeliver the very best results possible. When you purchased your leather garment, it probably had a hangtag that emphasized the nature of the variances in color and textures as characteristics that make each garment unique. That's a nice way of summarizing the following information.

- **Hides from different areas of different animals** are used to construct a leather garment. A really good manufacturer tries to match hides, texture, weight, and color with uniformity. But variations may be accentuated after cleaning.
- **Scar tissue and vein marks, which are inherent to natural animal hides**, can be especially

difficult. When the hides are being prepared, it is typical that scar tissue or other imperfections are "filled" before dyeing. The result of this element of manufacture is that cleaning may reveal these imperfections.

- **By putting the hide through additional tanning processes**, manufacturers make the naturally occurring wrinkles in any given hide far less noticeable. The end result is a much smoother and uniform appearance. With normal aging skins tend to contract; therefore, the natural wrinkles may reappear over time. The agitation of leather cleaning can accelerate this process.

These wrinkles are the result of inferior skins used during manufacture. Perhaps not visible prior to cleaning, it is inevitable that they will become more pronounced after cleaning.



- **Some skins may have less strength than others.** An animal skin has many weak areas. In addition, during processing, many skins are "split" or skived to achieve the desired thickness, but this procedure can also result in thin, weak areas. If these skins are used in certain panels of a garment, tears can result later from normal use or proper leather cleaning.



Thin or weak skins used in manufacture can tear during cleaning.

**Now back to that purple cow thing.** Although color initially may appear to be uniform, over a period of time, even without cleaning, color changes are likely to become more evident. Even exposure to light and atmospheric gases can cause leather dyes to oxidize over time. Re-dyeing methods may make this occurrence less objectionable, but it is a natural occurrence.



Exposure to light and natural elements can cause leather dyes to oxidize. Severe color losses are due to poor selection of dyes, oil, and finishes during the manufacturing process.

**After tanning and dyeing, leathers are finished under tension.** The degree of stretching varies depending on individual manufacturers' standards. Overstretched skins will tend to want to return to their more normal dimension as time goes on. Again, the normal agitation of leather care can aggravate this type of skin relaxation. In many cases, this shrinkage is minor and the snug feel should dissipate. As you wear the garment, the leather will once again conform to size.

**Poorly formulated adhesives** used in construction can dissolve during cleaning and may seep through the leather, causing shaded areas. This is most often noticeable around seams and hems.

**You've probably seen "washable suede."** Unfortunately, we sometimes see it after a trusting consumer has tried to follow care label instructions with a result that is less than satisfactory. Washable suede care labels typically state that the garment can be home-washed and dried. But there are many caveats. Some home stain removal agents, detergents, and fabric softener