



## **Veterans Leather Program**

Hunters in twenty-one states are now gathering animal hides for the **Veterans Leather Program**, one of the most visible activities of the Elks. For nearly 60 years, Elks have collected hides of deer, caribou, antelope, and, yes, elk. Hides are salted, stacked, shrink-wrapped and shipped to a Utah tannery for processing. Then, fingerless wheelchair gloves, along with finished leather for use in crafts programs, are sent to veterans' medical facilities across the country.

"It's a way to remember veterans' sacrifices, to assist them in occupational therapy and to help them get on with everyday life, Charles Cutshaw, national chairman of the Elks' program, told the Associated Press. "People have the impression that everything in a VA hospital is provided [by the government], but that's not true," Cutshaw said.

Last year, Elks distributed about 2,400 pairs of gloves, including many to wheelchair athletes. Elks are also the only source of leather for the crafting of wallets, belts and clothing in the VA's occupational therapy program – "something to occupy their minds and their muscles," adds Cutshaw.

### **LEATHER AND GLOVE PROCUREMENT**

To procure tanned leather or fingerless gloves for wheelchair veterans, a requisition (as shown on pages 29 and 30 in the National Veterans Service Commission Manual) must be submitted to the National Veterans Service Commission office in Chicago, by the Elks Veterans Affairs Voluntary

Service (VAVS) Representative or the Elk Representative at a State Veteran's Home. The Elk submitting the form must fill in their name and address, as the leather and gloves will be shipped to no other person. Leather cannot be shipped to post office boxes.

The form must be signed by the Chief of Occupational or Recreational Therapy at VA Medical Centers or the person who will supervise the program at State Veteran's Homes.

Requests that are exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Director in Chicago.

It is the responsibility of the Elks receiving the leather and gloves to see that they are only used for their intended purpose. It is recommended that the gloves be presented to wheelchair bound veterans by Elk members to receive maximum effect for the veterans and our organization.