

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MOUNTING THE TURKEY HEAD

Sever the head and neck directly below the wattles, follow around side of wattles and up nape of neck, leaving 1 or 2 rows of short feathers on neck - just enough to help hide incision. Begin skinning where the neck was severed, rolling the skin to the ears. Cut ears free close to skull. Proceed to the eyes, leaving plenty of membrane around the eyes. Continue skinning past the eyes to base of beak. **(NOTE:)** Be very careful to not cut a hole at the corner of the mouth. Cut the mandible (jawbone) bones, aligned with center of eye. Using a hacksaw, sever the beak from skull approximately 3/8" in front of eye leaving the beak attached to the skin. Remove palette and tissue from inside beak & nostril area. Trim flesh around ears. Trim any flesh & excess membrane around eyes. Leave all membrane inside neck and all tissue inside the wattles, caruncles, cap & snood. This is left to retain original shape and to absorb injection fluid.

The skin is now ready to soak in soapy water for 30 - 60 minutes. Squeeze the wattles, cap & snood to remove as much blood as possible. Towel dry excess moisture from inside of skin while it is inverted. Sew any large holes or cuts, then rub with dry preservative.

To prepare the head & neck form for mounting, wipe entire form with lacquer thinner. Trim foam from around eye that was left during the casting process. Sand form lightly with sandpaper where neck skin will contact form. Attach form to a temporary wood base.

If your mount is a closed beak mount, fill inside of beak with Critter Clay. Wrap beak with 3/8" wide masking tape. Leave the beak taped completely through the drying process.

All of the strutting forms have a notch made into the form to accept the mandible or jawbone. On all other forms, cut this notch from the front of the form where the beak attaches back to align with the center of the eye and wide enough to accept mandible bone.

If the form does not include the dewlap, rebuild dewlap (loose skin hanging under the neck and head) with Critter Clay to approximate original size & length, about 1/8" thick. Let clay dry approximately 30 min. before sliding skin on form. Or after skin is slipped over the form, make a roll of clay approximately 3/8" in diameter and length of dewlap. Slip clay under skin between the dewlap skin. Squeeze clay and model with fingers.

Clay should not be over 1/8" thick in dewlap. **(NOTE:)** The dewlap is not rebuilt on strutting heads.

After the neck skin is slipped on form, press beak filled with clay against form in correct position. Locate mandible bones in slots in form. Reaching through the eye with some clay on the end of a wire or small brain tool, place clay over mandible bone. This helps to hold the beak in position and also makes a smooth fit.

Start adding caulk under skin. **(NOTE:)** The caulk is used for an adhesive and also aids in shaping & modeling the head. (Any siliconized acrylic latex caulk will work. My favorite is Sherwin-Williams 950-A.) Place caulk tube snout through eye opening. From this position, caulk half of the top of skull and all the side of the head back to the ears adding a thin layer of caulk approximately 1/8" thick or less. Repeat this step on other side of head. To place caulk on remainder of neck, place caulk snout under neck where the neck was severed. Simply move caulk tube around under skin using fingers to locate caulk & desired thickness.

After completing the caulking, begin positioning the skin on form. **(NOTE:)** I can't emphasize enough the importance of having good reference pictures showing the pose you desire.) Align cap on top of head then pin in position. 1 or 2 pins can be used around the eye. A few pins can be used around wattles and where neck incision was made. Clean caulk from eye.

After head is posed & pinned, place in either a chest type or upright freezer - uncovered. Leave in freezer from 3 to 7 days. Remove head from freezer, allow to thaw in preparation for the injection process. **(NOTE:)** Instead of immediately injecting head after it is mounted and by placing in freezer the specified time listed above, there is less moving or sliding around of the skin, making the injection process easier. **(CAUTION:)** To be safe, wear eye protection; also use a syringe that requires the needles to be twisted on. Take care that you do not insert the needle too deeply - you could dispense solution on the form. You can observe the area filling when the fluid is being injected. Do not over fill. When the needle is retracted, some solution will leak from the needle hole. This is not a problem. Enough fluid will stay in the tissue. The solution in the tissue will harden in only a few minutes. This aids in knowing the area has been injected.

Using a 1 1/2" 20 ga. needle and 12 cc syringe, begin injecting the cap. The cap is made in partitions divided down the middle of the head. You must inject each half of the head separately. There are approximately 6 partitions on each side of cap. Place needle in each partition from side of head, inserting to center crease. Start injecting inject-o-fill filling each partition slowly. Pull needle back toward side of head, injecting as you withdraw needle. Proceed to complete all partitions on one side of head to base of snood. There are also 2 or 3 partitions where snood attaches to head. Inject these also. After both sides of cap are completed, proceed to inject snood. Insert needle at end of snood, gathering snood on the needle until needle tip is at the base of the snood. Begin injecting. Using your fingers squeeze solution inside snood to shape & position inject-o-fill. Slowly retract needle until snood is completely injected. This is for a fully extended snood. For a retracted snood (standing up & short) use less inject-o-fill. Place a 2" corsage pin into tip of snood, gathering snood on the pin. Insert pin into head form. The snood can now be slipped up and down on the pin to the desired length.

Inject caruncles or nodules which are above wattles. They become smaller in size closer to the head. Each nodule or caruncle has to be injected individually. Use a 18 ga. 1 1/2" needle to inject wattles. The wattles are divided into 3 sections. Insert needle into top of wattle section. Complete injecting the three separate wattles. Each individual wattle can be completely injected from 1 needle injection site - simply move the needle around.

(NOTE: VERY IMPORTANT) The faster the head dries, the more prone the skin is to turn an undesirable dark color. I have recently discovered that by injecting inject-o-fill under the skin of entire neck & head (all areas that weren't previously injected) results in less shrinkage & skin discoloration.

After injecting all areas of the head and neck, use water and a toothbrush to clean excess fluid from the head and feathers. Use a hairdrier to dry and fluff the small amount of feathers left on the neck. Re-adjust the wrinkles on the nape of the neck. The head is now ready to place in your freezer.

If using a conventional freezer, place the head uncovered in freezer 3 to 6 months - the longer the better (less shrinkage). A frostless freezer will shorten time approximately 50%. This system works equally well with a commercial freeze dry machine.

If you have access to formaldehyde, you can make your own inject-o-fill solution. For 8 oz. of solution use 1 oz. formaldehyde, 3 oz. water & 4 oz. Elmers white glue. Shake well. Stir before using after solution sits for any length of time.