

HOW TO WASH AND DYE CHAPS

We have been asked by many of our customers if chaps can be washed and dyed. Although we have not done this ourselves, we asked several of our customers who wash and dye chaps how they do it. This information we are passing on to you.

If your shotgun chaps are getting dirty, you can wash them. If you want to dye your chaps a different color, you may be able to, providing you are dyeing splits or the rough (sueded) side of top grain leather. You CANNOT dye the top grain (smooth out) side of the 2½-3 oz. show-chap leather. It's easy to wash them and safe too, if the chaps are made of good quality leather. Washing can be done to keep chaps clean or as a necessary step prior to dyeing them.

Washing Chaps

To wash them, fill the washer with hot sudsy water using any kind of detergent. Hot water is best to get them clean. Throw in the shotguns and let them agitate for a minute or two. Then pull them out and apply Spray N' Wash to the insides of the legs where dirt and sweat from the horse really accumulate. Skip this step if you are going to dye your chaps because this area will turn out a lighter shade. Using a fingernail brush, lightly scrub that area. Throw them back in the washer and let them go through the entire cycle. Use the regular or normal wash cycle, not the permanent press or delicate cycle; also set the timer on wash for eight or ten minutes. When the chaps are in the last rinse some people pour in a quart of pink fabric softener. (Blue fabric softener will turn white chaps green) That makes the chaps soft. Others feel that the fabric softener leaves a slight residue that attracts dirt. Take your choice. Do not put the chaps in an automatic dryer, as the intense heat will shrink them badly. Instead hang them outside in the shade. Hanging them in the sun will fade them and might cause them to shrink. When they are bone dry, throw them in the dryer and let them tumble on the fluff cycle (with no heat) for about ten minutes. That makes them even softer. When they finish tumbling, take hold of them and pull them in all directions. If they did shrink a little, that stretches them. If chaps do shrink a bit, it's usually in the width of the thigh area, and not in the leg length. So really pull to stretch the thighs. Then a blow dryer is good to raise the nap. Some people let their chaps get about half dry then wear them while they finish drying.

Dyeing Chaps

If you are going to dye the chaps, it's not necessary to dry them. Just wash and rinse thoroughly; it's not necessary to add fabric softener to the rinse water. It's a waste of money, since you have to rinse them again after dyeing them. Use Rit liquid dyes because they are much easier to

use than the powder dyes, and the difference in price is

negligible. You can completely change the color of chaps or you can simply freshen up a color that has faded. Changing to some colors is easy. Like from gray to black. But for some color changes it's best to strip the existing color first. If you have never dyed chaps before do something simple at first, like freshening up a faded color or taking an old pair that's a light color such as tan or palomino, and dyeing them a darker color like navy or black. When you are ready to dye the chaps, fill the washer with hot water-the hottest possible. Thoroughly shake the bottles of dye and pour them in. How much dye should you use? If changing the color, use four to six bottles, depending on how deep you want the color. If just freshening up a faded color, use just a couple of bottles. Mix the dye in the water thoroughly; then dip in a strip of old leather or fabric to test the color. This is especially important if you are dyeing the chaps to match a hat or a shirt. Until you get the right intensity of color, keep playing with the dyes. Then put the chaps in. If dyeing them a pastel color, let them agitate just a minute or two. Then pull them out and check the color. If it's not quite right, let them agitate another minute or two and check them again. As soon as the color's right, put the chaps in an empty bucket or tub while you drain the washer. Then immediately refill it with rinse water and put the chaps back in. On the final rinse cycle, add about a quart of fabric softener. Then let them dry by hanging them in the shade. After they dry, run them through the fluff cycle; then tug on them to stretch them out. You have to do some guesstimating as to the color, because when the chaps are wet their color will be darker than when dry-just as anything wet is a darker color. Also, a little bit of the dye will be rinsed out. So if you are trying for a light pastel color, you might have to get them a little darker than desired during the actual dyeing. But if they don't turn out right, you can do it again. Dyeing for dark colors is easier. Agitate them for several minutes, then let them soak for a few minutes. If dyeing for a black color, you might even let them soak overnight. The blacker they are; the prettier they are-and you can't get black too black. But, when you dye a dark color, be careful to rinse them very thoroughly, and send them through the. rinse cycles twice. Otherwise, the dye might rub off against the saddle. If you are wondering if it's possible to dye a hat to match chaps, we don't know of anyone who has done it successfully. One last word of advice. After you have dyed chaps in your washer, run the empty washer through one cycle with bleach added to the water. Otherwise, your next batch of laundry might come out a different color!

GOOD LUCK !!