

The Australian Leather Industry Explained

Key points

- **Leather production is one of Australia's oldest industries renowned for its quality.**
- **The industry saves around 8 million cattle hides and over 26 million sheep, goat and kangaroo skins from landfill every year.**
- **AHSLEA members only source from government registered meat processors with Australia's strict animal welfare legislation.**
- **Australian leather processors are rated on sustainability by the internationally recognised Leather Working Group.**
- **AHSLEA promotes the use of International Contracts that ensure a fairness and consistency in arrangements and terms.**

The Australian leather industry features several family businesses that have a respect for the craft passed on through the generations. Along with the desire to retain this knowledge, is a drive to modernise the process and meet changing customer needs. This evolution has been taking place over the last four decades, operating under Australia's strict environmental protection regulations which has ensured the Australian leather industry is amongst the cleanest in the world.



The Australian leather industry in numbers

TYPES OF HIDES/SKINS EXPORTED



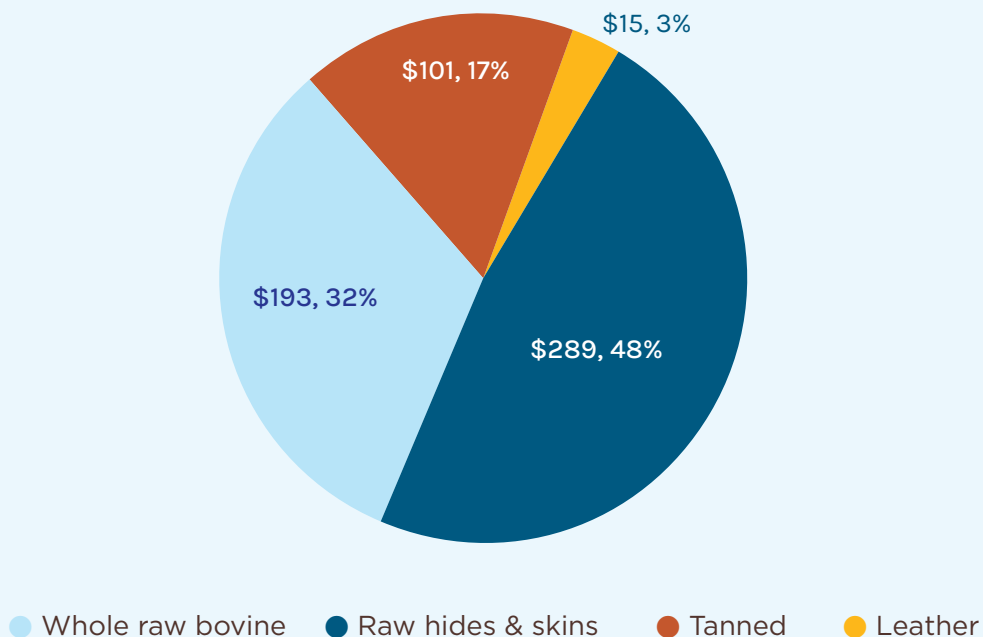
SIZE OF THE INDUSTRY 2021



MEAT COPRODUCT

29.6 million animals slaughtered in Australia for meat in 2021.
This valuable export by-product would otherwise end up in landfill if not for hide and skin exports.

EXPORTS OF HIDES AND SKINS 2021 (\$MILLION)



Sourcing

AHSLEA members only source from ethical meatworks that uphold national animal welfare and sustainability standards. This includes establishments that are certified under the [Australian Livestock Processing Animal Welfare Certification System](#) and the [National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme](#).

In the case of kangaroo, only skins with the appropriate state government tags are sourced from approved meatworks that comply with the National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes to ensure they are harvested humanely and sustainably.

AHSLEA-accredited processors only source tagged skins from approved meatworks with accredited feedlots to guarantee their production comes from humane sources.



Processing

AHSLEA-accredited processors must comply with the [Australian Code of Practice for Processing of Hides and Skins for export](#). The Code sets standards around construction, equipment, and methods of operations; outlines quality assurance processes and staff training; and makes sure the processor complies with legislative requirements. Auditing and training are carried out by third-party provider [AUS-MEAT](#).

Australian processors cut, tan, finish and dye animal hides, skins, fur and leather. Chrome, vegetable and aluminium tanning occur in Australia depending on customer needs.

Amid a global move towards more environmentally sustainable leather tanning, many Australian processors have invested heavily in clean tanning, waste management and carbon emissions reductions.

Initiatives include:

- chrome and pickle recycling
- hair and fat saving technologies
- the reuse of treated wastewater
- the use of renewable energy
- increased drum capacities whilst minimizing environmental impact
- the strict prohibition of all internationally banned hazardous chemicals on the [ZDHC Manufacturing Restricted Substances List](#).

How do I know I'm buying ethical?

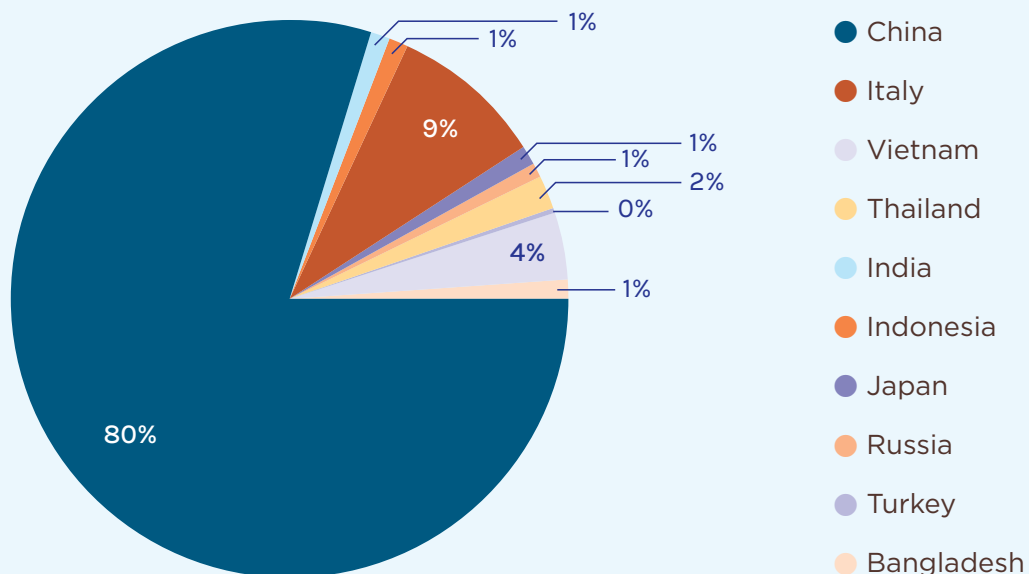
Consumers and brands can identify ethical and environmentally responsible leather processors by the [Leather Working Group](#) (LWG) logo. The LWG audit is the most rigorous and widely accepted environmental accreditation scheme for the leather manufacturing industry in the world. The audit process addresses traceability and processing along the leather value chain.



Exporting

Australian Bureau of Statistics data indicates Australian hide and leather exports valued at \$598 million in 2021 were shipped to 39 countries. AHSLEA promotes the use of International Contracts that ensure a fairness and consistency in arrangements and terms. These were developed by the International Council of Tanners, and the International Council of Hides, Skins and Leather Traders Associations.

TOP TEN HIDES AND SKINS EXPORT MARKETS FOR AUSTRALIA BY VALUE (\$582M)



The Australian Hide Skin & Leather Exporters Association (AHSLEA) is the national membership body representing the interests of the major exporters of Australian cattle and calf hides, sheep and lamb skins, kangaroo skins and goat skins. It is also a member of the International Council of Hides, Skins and Leather Traders Association (ICHSLTA), which promotes, develops and protects the international trade in raw hides, skins and leathers.