

What You Can Expect After Cleaning

Leather garments are made of skins taken from various portions of the animal and usually from several different animals. The manufacturer tries to match the skins so that your garment is as uniform as possible, but even with the best matching, there will be some variance in texture, weight, and colour uniformity. These variations may be accentuated after cleaning.

Loss of Colour

Be prepared to see a slight variance in the depth of colour after cleaning. In manufacture, the tanner immersed the skin in a dye bath to obtain a uniform colour, but skins from various parts of the animal may vary in colourfastness.

Loss of Oils

During tanning, leathers are impregnated with oils to keep them supple. Some of these oils are lost in cleaning, and although the professional leather cleaner has special additives to restore suppleness, there could be some change in the feel or hand of the garment.

Scar Tissue

The animal's skin may have been injured while it was alive by briars, barbed wire, diseases, or fights with other animals. The resulting scar tissue does not dye evenly, so it is covered with fillers before dyeing. These fillers are removed in cleaning, and the original scar tissue will become more apparent, usually as a light area.

Vein Marks

Some thick skins are split, revealing the veins in the skin as irregular, wavy lines. These are also marked with fillers and reappear after cleaning.

Wrinkles

Skins taken from the loose neck or belly portion of an animal are naturally wrinkled. As the skins relax with age, the wrinkles reappear. The agitation that occurs in cleaning can cause greater relaxation of the leather, accentuating the wrinkles.

Texture Change

The manufacturer tries to select skins of uniform texture for a garment, but sometimes smoother skin is combined with a skin or portion of skin with a coarser texture. Cleaning may make this variance more apparent.

Shrinkage

Some shrinkage will likely occur in your garment over time as the skins relax. This may be accentuated in cleaning. As you wear a leather garment it tends to conform comfortably to your body. After cleaning, the garment may feel a little uncomfortable or snug when you first put it on. As you wear it this feeling will dissipate. Sometimes skins are overstretched in manufacture and relax permanently. This problem cannot be anticipated by the cleaner.

Thin Skins

Some skins are extremely thin and too fragile for use in apparel. These skins tend to wear exceptionally fast even with normal usage. The agitation of cleaning will further aggravate the damage of thin skins.

Oxidation (Colour Change)

Dyes can oxidize from exposure to light and gases in the atmosphere. This is a slow, progressive condition that develops with age. It may become more noticeable after cleaning, but protected areas, such as under the collar, will retain more of the original colour.

Colour Shading from Adhesives

Adhesives are sometimes used to glue seams, hems, and other areas during construction. These glues or adhesives may not be solvent resistant. Sometimes the glues don't dissolve completely, but leach through the leather and cause shaded areas.

Shaded Leather

The texture of skins varies, and some skins tend to absorb more of the fat liquors and cleaning additives in cleaning and come out a little darker in some areas than others. Sometimes this shading can be seen on the garment before cleaning, but cleaning will accentuate it. It is a natural phenomenon that is beyond the control of the cleaner.

Leather Trims

Leather buttons and leather piping on fabric items sometimes cause problems by bleeding colour onto the adjacent fabric. All attached trim should be able to withstand the care method on the label; if this problem occurs, the item should be returned to the store where it was purchased. A fashion trend is to attach dark coloured suede, leather or snakeskin trim on white or pastel cloth garments.

Drycleaners may choose not to accept the risk of processing these items based on the evidence of colourfastness tests performed. Once dye bleeding and transfer occur in cleaning, restoration is usually not possible.

Imitation Leathers and Suedes

Imitation leathers and suedes are produced in a variety of ways and are sometimes difficult to distinguish from the real thing. Smooth leather-like fabrics may be coated with vinyl-based or urethane-based films. Suede-like fabrics may be made with nonwoven urethane structures or may be knit or woven fabrics flocked to look like suede.

It is very important to check the care label on an imitation leather or suede. Some of these fabrics are quite fragile and will not withstand drycleaning. The most common problem is failure of a film coating or of an adhesive. This results in self-sticking of the fabric or in blistering or puckering of the coating. On flocked items, the flocked coating may be lost in wear areas such as collars and cuffs. Cleaning may aggravate this condition. Nonwoven structures usually withstand drycleaning very well.