

**REAL
LEATHER.
STAY
DIFFERENT.**

LEATHER BY NUMBERS:

FACTS AND FIGURES FROM THE US LEATHER INDUSTRY AND BEYOND

Note: All figures as of January 2021 or latest available.

ZERO cattle are killed to make US leather. US hides have been valued at **LESS THAN 2%** of a cow's total value for the last two years, which is why they are considered a by-product and often end up as waste. The average price per head of US cattle is \$1,146, while hides vary in price from **\$5 TO \$35 PER PIECE**, if sold at all. ⁽¹⁾

300M hides come from the meat and dairy industries around the world. Approximately **33M** were processed the US. ⁽²⁾ **AS MANY AS 5.5M US HIDES** ended up as landfill in 2019, this is **15%** of the national total.

Worldwide the waste figure is approximately **40%** or **120M** hides. With the average hide weighing 25Kg this means that **3M TONNES** are thrown away ever year.

Leather production turns more than **4.5M TONNES OF** potential waste, every year, into usable, durable goods. This saves **2.7M TONS OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS** from landfill sites. ⁽³⁾

More than **26,000** people are employed in the US leather industry taking in hide plants, tanneries, exporters and agents. With approximately **110** facilities, it has a turnover of **\$2BILLION**. ⁽⁴⁾

The US exports approximately **95%** of all cattle hide and wet blue leather products it produces, worth **\$1.62BILLION**. ⁽⁵⁾

Around **50%** of global leather production is used to make footwear, **17%** for car upholstery, **TEN PER CENT** for clothing and **NINE PER CENT** for furniture. ⁽⁶⁾

Water consumption for the production of leather from cattle hides has fallen by more than **35%** in the past 25 years, down from **60 CUBIC-METERS** per ton of hides to **38 CUBIC-METERS** per ton. US tanneries are required, by law, to connect to effluent treatment plants to prevent pollution. ⁽⁷⁾

Leather will biodegrade in **LESS THAN 50 YEARS**. In contrast, it can take **500 YEARS** or more for synthetics, made from petrochemicals, to degrade. ⁽⁸⁾

EPA's conversion rate for food waste is for **EACH METRIC TON OF WASTE DISPOSAL** there is **0.88 MT** of **CO2 EQUIVALENT** emitted. In this case, mostly as methane. ⁽⁹⁾

This factsheet is produced by the Leather and Hide Council of America (L&HCA), established to promote the US leather industry which is responsible for a significant proportion of the international trade in hides. The L&HCA works to establish best practice in US leather production and to share this worldwide. Figures quoted refer to the USA unless otherwise stated.

SOURCE:

- ⁽¹⁾ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/194290/head-value-of-cattle-and-calves-in-the-us-since-2001>
https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/nw_ls448.txt
- ⁽²⁾ <https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/r207tp32d/34850245n/5712mr72x/lsan0420.pdf>
- ⁽³⁾ 2020 LHCA Infographic
- ⁽⁴⁾ <https://www3.epa.gov/ttn/chief/ap42/ch09/final/c9s15.pdf>
- ⁽⁵⁾ <https://thesustainabilityalliance.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/US-Hide-Skin-and-Leather-Factsheet-6.9.2017.pdf>
- ⁽⁶⁾ <https://leathercouncil.org/information/statistics-sources-of-information/>
- ⁽⁷⁾ 2020 LHCA factsheet
- ⁽⁸⁾ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leather#:~:text=Leather%20biodegrades%20slowly%E2%80%9494taking%2025,or%20more%20years%20to%20decompose.>
- ⁽⁹⁾ https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-03/documents/warm_v14_containers_packaging_non-durable_goods_materials.pdf