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CONSERVATION TREATMENT REPORT

DATE: July 8, 2025

CLIENT: Planting Fields Foundation

POINT OF CONTACT:

Emily Leger
Collections and Exhibitions Manager
Planting Fields Foundation
PO Box 660
Oyster Bay, New York 11771

ARTIFACT: Elk Trophy Head Mount

OBJECT ID: 1955.002.028

PREPARATION: Taxidermy mount of head of an elk with 13 point antlers with soft tissue of nose and eyelines modeled in wax. Closed mouth pose, head straight. Skin shaped over wood form with burlap and some plaster modeling. Mouth closed. Lead earliners. Glass eyes, probably painted on reverse. Iron alloy hanging hardware on wood base of form (not visible in this examination but noted in prior treatment report).

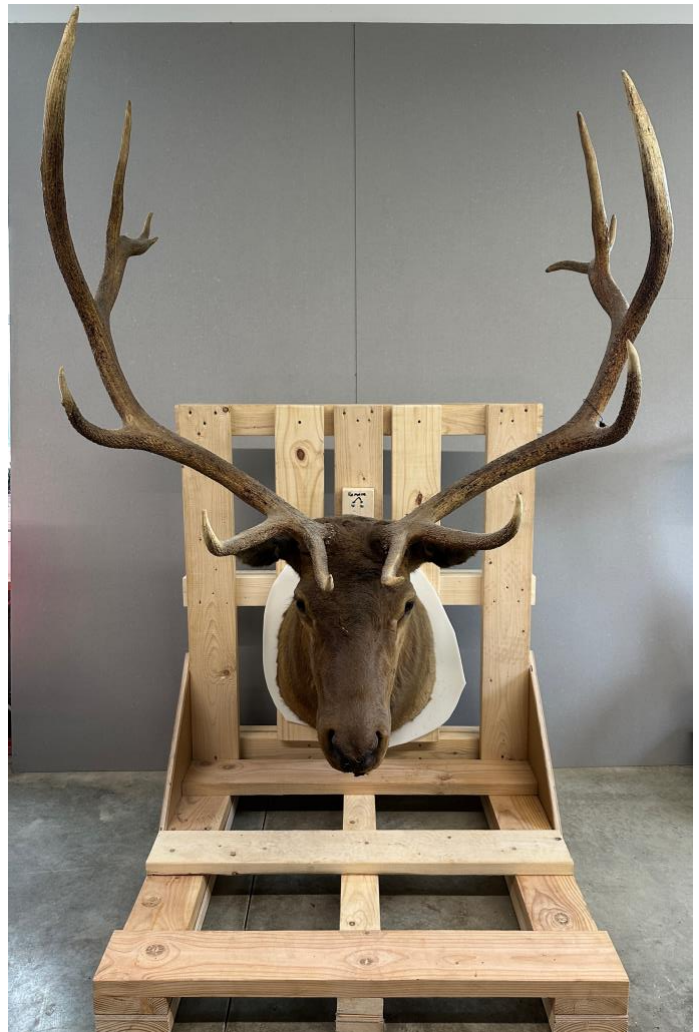
SPECIMEN IDENTIFICATION: Wapiti (Elk) or Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*), adult male

DIMENSIONS:

L: 59"

W: 39"

H: 50"





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EXAMINATION CONDITIONS:

The specimen was examined *in situ* in the Gallery, Coe Hall, from a ladder as well as from the mezzanine located to the proper right side of the mount. Ambient light and an auxiliary LED lamp were used in the examination. Not all portions of the specimen could be examined *in situ* but the most significant condition issues could be seen.

EXAMINED BY/DATES:

This specimen was examined by Rachael Arenstein and Eugenie Milroy on July 10, 2024. A prior treatment report by Catharine Hawkes dated September 2002 was provided by the PFF.

BACKGROUND/PROVENANCE:

Specimen was collected in Cody Wyoming and mounted by James Lippit Clark, circa 1920.

STATUS:

In her July 2002 report, C. Hawks identified the specimen as Wapiti (Elk) or European red deer (*Cervus elaphus*). Listed as an elk but the scientific name on the data sheet is for a Red Deer. Hawks suggested that:

“Research into the history of the specimen and consultation with a mammologist would help to determine species identification. *C. elaphus* occur in Europe, parts of Asia, southern Siberia, Mongolia, Manchuria, Korea, parts of China, northwestern Africa, southern Canada, and parts of the US. Populations in many parts of the world are greatly reduced, and at least 2 US subspecies are extinct. The North American population is now subject to controlled sport hunting.”

TESTING:

C. Hawks reported that this tested positive for the presence of arsenic in 2002 using Merckoquandt arsenic test strips; specimen was probably treated with arsenic trioxide as part of



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initial preparation; samples for testing were 3 cotton-tipped swabs moistened in reverse-osmosis deionized water and wiped on surfaces of the specimen.

CONDITION (STRUCTURE AND SURFACE)

Hair is dirty and grungy in appearance. Hair patterns are disrupted and unruly. Antlers are dusty with mold visible in some areas. Several cracks and splits in the skin around nose, muzzle, and chin. The most significant new condition issue is 3" x 3" loss at front of chin exposing the shellac and burlap substrate as well as splits and cracks in the surrounding skin. This damage is new since the object was previously treated in 2002. Other skin issues include splitting in the nose, grimy and dirty surfaces. Nose pad exhibits cracks and previously filled areas are now noticeably different from those which have not been filled. Ear skin delaminated and split at tips. Major fading of skin/hair overall due to exposure to UV and daylight.

Eyes - Very slight iridescence and cloudiness, possibly just dust/dirt, or possibly an early stage of "glass disease." Further examination is necessary once the specimen is deinstalled. The eyelines around both eyes have cracks in the fills and paint. Tears in the skin around eyes. Splitting and drumming around the PR eye. On the PL eye (above the tear duct) there is a 2" long crack

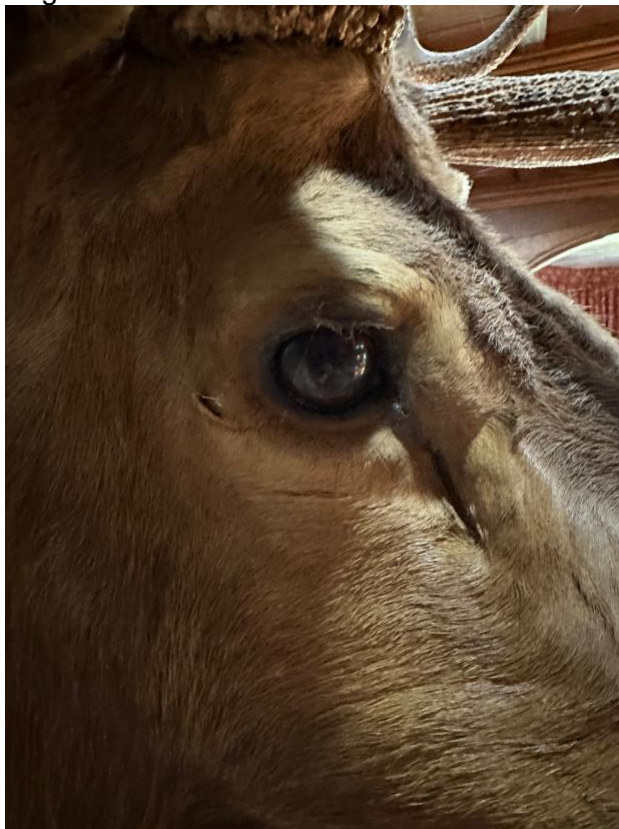


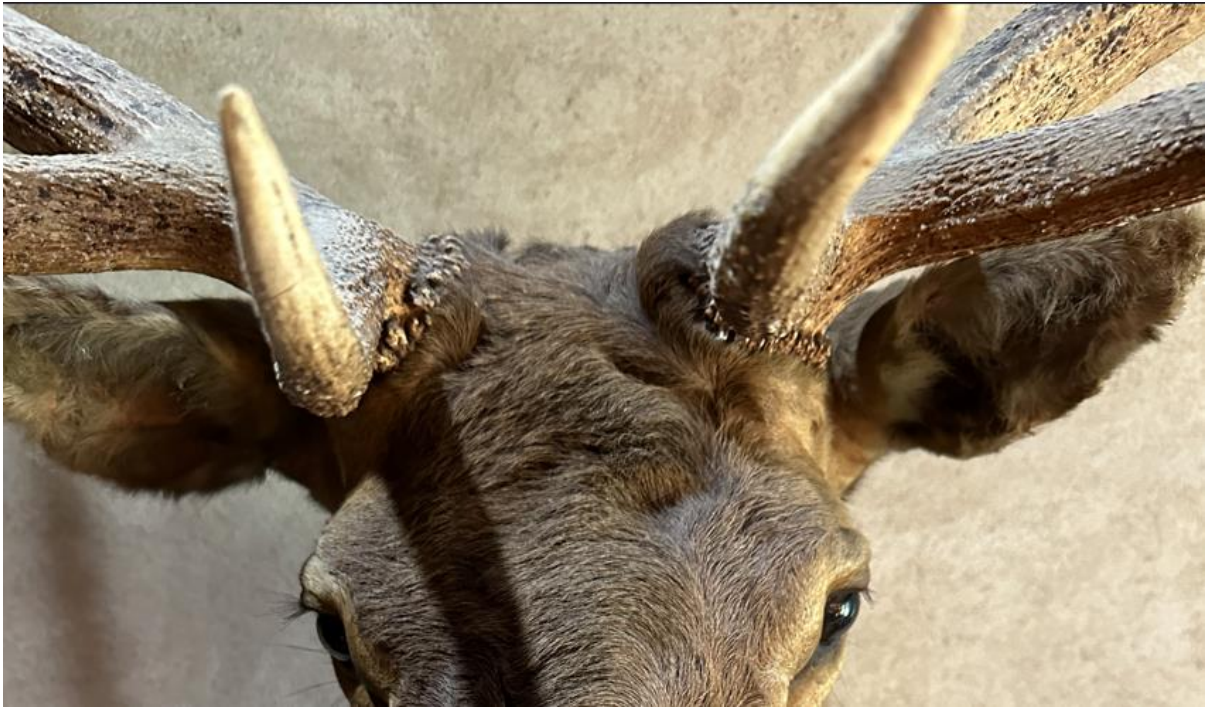
Image: Tears around both eyes, dirty and discolored glass and fill material



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Ears - Hair voids on both ears. Lead liners, fair condition. Plaster visible in ears, cracks on back of PR ear; there is excess adhesive in the hair of the ears and they are dirty. Proper left ear has split seams with lead liner visible. New cracking adjacent to the seam. It was not possible to get good detail images of the ears in situ.



Nose - Some hair voids on nose. Cracks and paint and fill losses on both nostrils. Large skin tear above nostrils. Skin tear on L side from corner of eye to nostril.

Image: detail of nose



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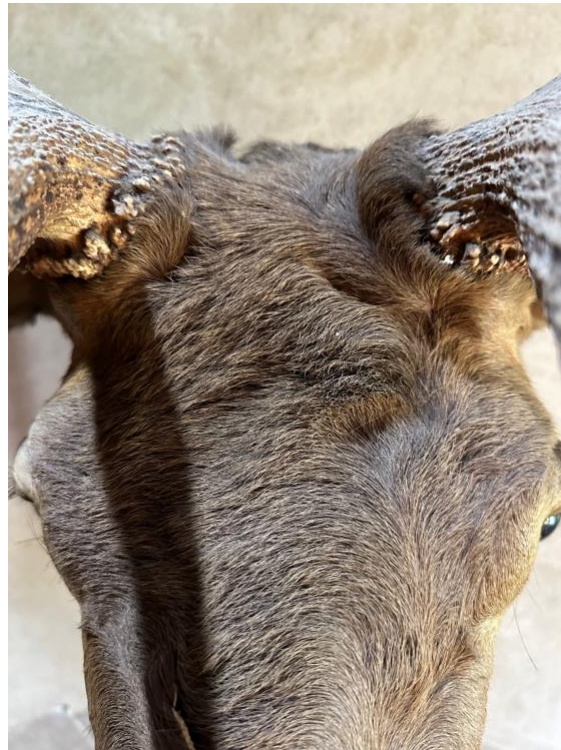
Mouth/Muzzle/Chin – Loss of skin at lower mouth/chin exposing shellacked burlap fill material. Tears in surrounding skin on chin. Drumming on muzzle and in cheek area both sides.
Image: Muzzle mouth and nostrils showing skin loss, cracks and damage at chin.



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Neck - Neck sutures could not be examined from the viewing angle.
Skin appears stable on top of head between antlers.

Image: Proper right detail of neck and top of head between antlers



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Antlers - Antlers are securely attached, there is some shrinkage around them and a gap between the skin and the antlers needs filling; The main issue with the antlers is mold, surface dirt and grime. Very dusty/dirty, moldy, but otherwise in sound structural condition.

Image: Particulate, dust and mold on antlers



TREATMENT PROPOSAL:

Treatment goals – The goal of the treatment is stabilization and cosmetic repairs to improve the appearance and species accuracy of the mount. This mount exhibits typical condition issues associated with its age, the materials and methods of taxidermy as well as the historic house exhibition environment. The layer of dust on the antlers is particularly heavy and the area is visibly moldy. This object is a high priority due to mold as well as the disfiguring skin loss at chin area.

Documentation - Conservation work will be documented in writing and with digital photography before, during and after treatment in conformance with AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice. All reports and images will be supplied to PFF after project completion.

Cleaning – All surfaces will be dry cleaned using HEPA vacuum and micro tool attachments. Further cleaning methods with dry and solvent dampened sponges (PVOH, Absorene and/or cosmetic sponges) will be tested for use as needed. Antlers, glass eyes, and modeling on ears, eyes, nose and mouth will be cleaned using cotton swabs dampened with a solution of 1:1 ethanol/deionized water and/or ethanol, depending upon the results of testing with the solvents. Hair will be cleaned using soot removal sponges followed by 95% ethanol on Kimwipes (lint-free laboratory wipes), microfiber cleaning cloths, and cotton swabs, as needed. The hanging hardware will be examined for stability once the specimen is deinstalled and cleaned as appropriate or replaced as necessary. Moldy areas on antlers will be paid particular attention and treated with ethanol or isopropanol (70% solution) sprayed on surfaces after other cleaning.

Reforming/Humidification and Stabilization – Skin deformations will be reduced and skin will be replaced to its proper location/s. Skin will be relaxed, and if necessary, humidified with Gore-Tex and blotters until it may be manipulated back into position. As needed the ear liners will be re-shaped and the skin re-attached to the liner using adhesive. Either Paraloid B-72 (methyl acrylate/ethyl methacrylate co-polymer resin) in acetone or BEVA (ethylene vinyl acetate co-polymer resin) either as a heat-set film (BEVA 371) or as a gel (ethylene vinyl acetate and acrylic resins with cellulosic materials), both of which are acetone soluble when dry. All other cracks, splits and separations to the skin will be repaired. Repairs will be carried out with one of the adhesives used to repair the ears as mentioned above.

Skin fills – The disfiguring skin loss at the chin will be filled with appropriate skin sourced to match the hair. Skin will be attached to surrounding areas with BEVA heat set film and Reemay or other synthetic backing fabric, toned as needed.

Re-pointing – The specimens will be re-pointed which will include the re-building and re-coloring of the mouth parts, soft tissue around eyes, interior of the ears and the nose. This taxidermy term may not be familiar to all conservators, but is generally associated with the final stages of the taxidermy process and is standard in finishing out the piece. It consists of rebuilding any shrunken areas or dried and unnatural textures caused by the tanned skin drying during the taxidermy process or, later, due to agents of deterioration over the history the mount. Conservation tested fill material will be used to fill these areas and sculpt them to appear fuller, more lifelike and more anatomically accurate. Typically, these are the soft tissue or exposed skin areas such as the interior of the ears, eyelids, nose, nose interiors, mouth interiors, and exposed lips. These fills will be prepared with Paraloid B-72 resin bulked with glass



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microballoons or proprietary acrylic fill materials such as Flugger or Modostuc. The fills will be colored with Golden's acrylic emulsion paint or dry pigments in Paraloid B-72.

A final top coat of the same resin will be applied to achieve the desired "wet" look to the mouth, nose, and eye lids.

Restoration/Recoloring – This term describes the restoration of the specimen's natural colors by way of dying, painting, or the application of dry pigments. As mentioned in the condition section, daylight and UV light have contributed to the fading of natural pigments in the hair. Other factors that have likely contributed to the loss of natural pigments are general age of the piece as well as the type of tan used to preserve the skin. Restoration of a more natural color will increase the accuracy of the piece while creating a dramatic visual enhancement. After testing, colorant will be chosen. This will range from dry pigments, to Orasol dye. Golden's Acrylic emulsion paint will be used to recolor soft tissue areas. Fills and scratches on the plaque will be toned with acrylics or dry pigments in resin to be chosen after testing.

Grooming/Finishing – Proper grooming of the fur will result in a more accurate representation of the specimen.

CONSERVATION TREATMENT:

Packing/Shipping – Marshall Fine Arts LTD , professional art movers deinstalled the mount and transported it on a travel frame to the conservator's studio in Cold Spring NY. The object remained on the palette frame for the duration of the treatment and the return to Coe Hall.

Documentation –

- Digital images were taken before, during and after treatment in conformance with AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice. All reports and images have been supplied via Dropbox to PFF.

Cleaning –

- All surfaces were dry cleaned using a HEPA vacuum, Hake brush, fan brush and/or micro tool attachments.
- Absorene brand non-vulcanized rubber soot sponges were used to remove further particulates from hair and antlers.
- Antlers were wiped with prewetted Ethanol wipes.
- Hair was cleaned with 95% ethanol on Webril wipes and dried with Kimwipes (lint free laboratory wipes)
- Glass eyes and modeling on ears, eyes, nose and mouth were further cleaned with cotton swabs dampened with a solution of 1:1 ethanol/deionized water
- The metal tag and wire were wiped with the ethanol wipes.

Mold Treatment –

- The antlers were sprayed (two rounds) with a 70% solution of isopropanol after dry cleaning. The goal of this treatment was to denature any mold spores remaining after cleaning.

Reforming/Humidification and Stabilization –

- This skin of the specimen has experienced a considerable amount of cracking and deformation. Notable cracked and lifted areas, seen in the digital images include areas near both eyes, on the front proper right top of the nose, throughout the muzzle, and



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nostrils. There is a very extensive area of cracking on the underside of the chin. There is a skin loss measuring approximately 2" x 3" in the front center of the chin extending to the underside.

- Areas of extensive deformation were humidified using Gore-Tex and blotters (held in place with Teflon tape) as well as ambient humidification in the treatment area. This allowed the skin to be manipulated back into alignment.
- Most of the cracks in the skin were repaired with BEVA (ethylene vinyl acetate co-polymer resin) as a heat-set film (BEVA 371). The film was adhered to a backing or Reemay or Stabiltex fabrics (depending on the area) that had been toned with Goldens acrylic emulsion paint.
- A 50:50 mixture of Lascaux 498HV and 303 HV was utilized on repairs at the area on the center underside of the neck. This break was difficult to access and required more strength and flexibility so this adhesive was a better solution for this area.
- The split skin on the ears was joined over the lead liners using the BEVA heat-set adhesive film and Reemay backing. These backings cover the lead liners

Skin fills –

- The disfiguring skin loss at the front and underside of the chin was filled with two kinds of fur. Faux fur was used to fill the light colored section at the front of the chin and a section of cow hair was used at the lower proper right underside. The loss area was fully lined with toned Reemay film adhered to the adjacent skin with BEVA film. Some of the cracks at the underside of the neck had accompanying hair losses. Flocked and toned faux fur was added to these cracks as needed to soften and decrease the width of the remaining cracks. It is hoped that this solution will be suitable for viewing from below in Coe Hall.

Re-pointing/soft tissue fills/Recoloring–

- As this is an important piece of historic taxidermy, stabilization took precedence over restoration for this treatment. After careful examination and consideration, none of the soft tissue was coated or treated to change the sheen or "lifelike appearance of the piece." Rather, the only area of soft tissue that was filled was the skin of the nose and nostril section. This area had become shrunken, dried and extensively cracked and prone to further damage from maintenance cleaning and general exhibition. The nose was repaired with a series of BEVA band-aids used to bridge the cracks.
- These areas were then filled with Paraloid B-72 resin bulked with glass microballoons and toned with dry pigments. The fills were shaped and then further colored with Goldens acrylic emulsion paint or dry pigments in Paraloid B-72.
- Given the history and conditions of exhibition of this piece, (high overhead and in the historic home lighting conditions) the addition of colorant to the hair - such as dye or pigment did not seem advisable. There was a strong improvement in the color of the object after cleaning.
- Watercolor pencils were used to further integrate the hair fills and to tone other areas of exposed skin or fills.

Grooming/Finishing

- The hair was groomed with a rounded tip wide tooth metal comb as well as tweezers and spatulas to create a more cohesive appearance and to cover fills and repairs.



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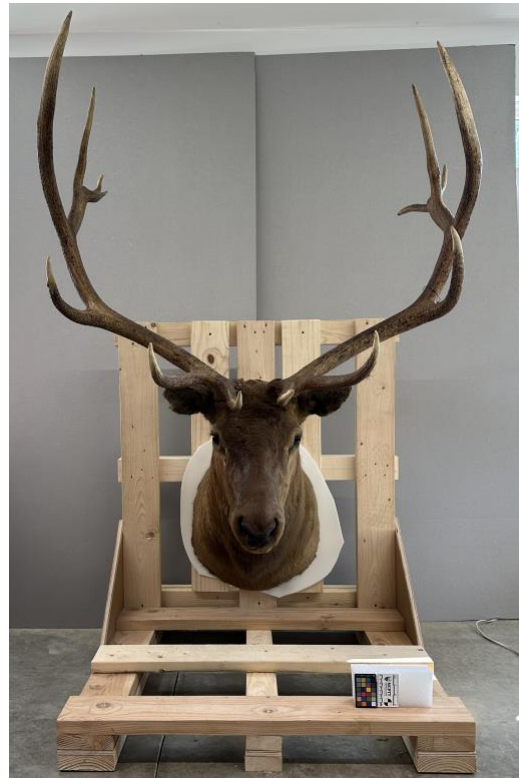
Hanging Hardware –

- As the object was treated while installed on the travel frame/palette, the back of the mount and any hanging hardware were not examined by the conservator. We request that the hanging be checked and repaired or replaced by Marshall Arts as required.

TREATMENT IMAGES:



OVERALL BEFORE TREATMENT



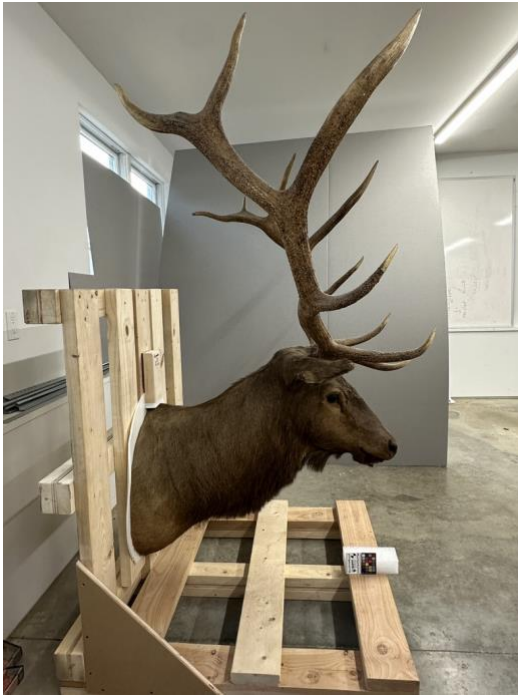
OVERALL AFTER TREATMENT



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PR SIDE BT



PR SIDE AT



PL SIDE BT



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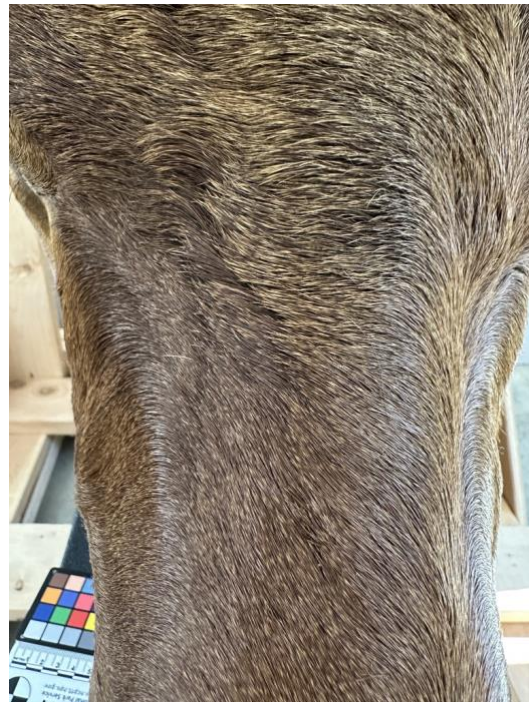
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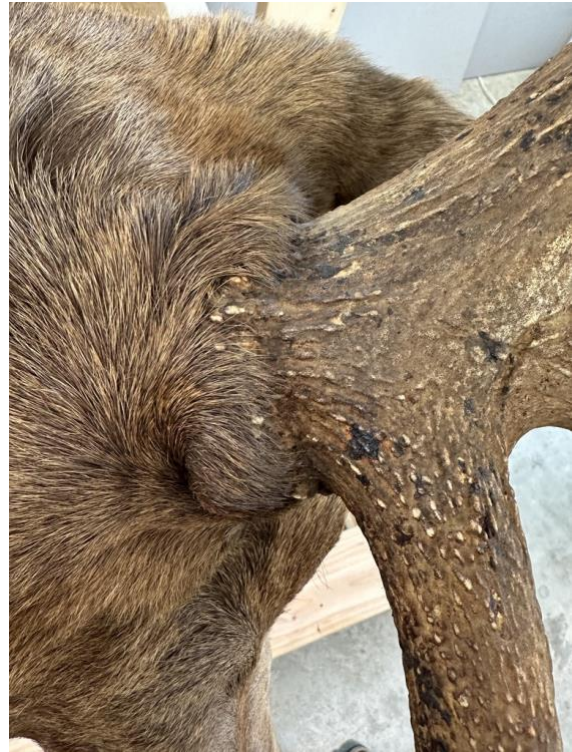
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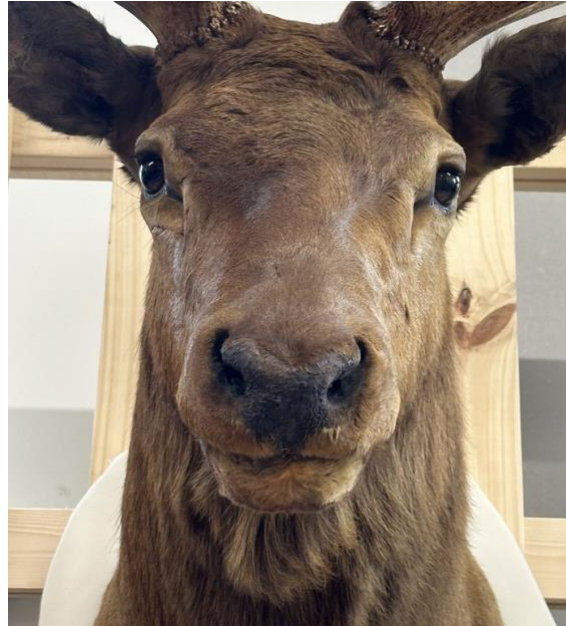
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Eugenie Milroy

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