

Notes on the Care and Cure of Bladders from an old Fool to a young Fool

by Dr. Ellis Tinsley

You need 2 days to prepare bladders from scratch and 24 to 48 hours to reconstitute stored dry bladders.

Make friends with a slaughterer and give him definite instructions. It may be a good thing to tip him if he does well but I am not very good at it and never know how much. Most respond to thanks and appreciation. Find out which days they kill and be prepared to collect at their convenience. A slaughterer may try to put you off or may try it on in front of his friends by dragging you through places you might not take a favourite aunt.

You need beasts' bladders — (cows, steers, heifers, etc.) — not pigs' bladders. The latter are killed for meat too small these days and yield piddling bladders.

If you must have pigs' bladders, request old sows. You can tell beasts from pigs by the size and the smell.

Ask for beasts' bladders, with long pipes, and no slashes in them. You should try for 12 - 30. A rejection rate of at least 50% is usual when first cleaning and sorting them unless you have an exceptional slaughterer.

Equipment needed for bladderwork:

Good scissors.

Very strong, thin string — (preferably linen). Nylon stretches and cotton snaps. It is difficult to get and if you find a good source buy up a quantity if you are going in for bladders in a big way.

Football valve, bicycle pump adaptor, plus the pump and connector. The valve costs a few pence from a Sports shop.

Large bowl of cold water.

Plastic sheet or aprons.

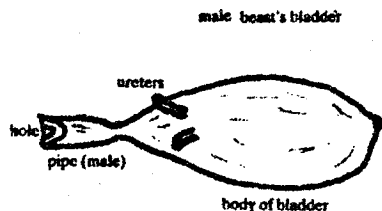
Old chairs or stools.

Thin rubber gloves if you don't like animal smells which cling to the hands.

Amenable help-mate — (soul-mate).

Initial preparation of fresh bladders.

This can be done by yourself.



The beast's bladder is about 4 inches long, thick and fleshy, and will have lumps of fat, other bits like intestine, and surplus fine tissue attached to it if it is a good one.

- 1) Squeeze to drain.
- 2) Examine for defects:
 - pipe — too short, may be slashed.
 - ureters — should be easily found — often in fat. If very short they will leak when bladder is inflated.
 - slash in the muscle of the body of the bladder particularly around the neck and the ureters. The muscle may be very thin at one point.

Reject defective bladders at this stage.

3) Clean off surplus fat, bits, and attached fine tissue, and expose and release the ureters.

- 4) Cut the urethra (pipe) clean across:
 - male 3cms./1^h to 1½"
 - female — should have clear neck of at least 1cm., preferably 2-3cms.

5) Tie off the ureters with thin string at the base — this is fiddly and a pair of tweezers (forceps) may help. (Artery forceps are better).

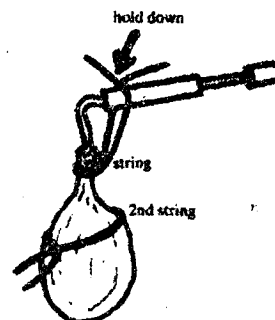
6) Rinse in water if dirty or preferred — optional. The bladder must be blotted dry with a cloth unless inflated at once.

7) Clean bladders may be stored in a fridge for a day or two or may be deep frozen for a week or two.

To inflate the bladder

This procedure can be done by yourself but it will be much easier and quicker with an amenable help-mate. Each bladder requires two pieces of string a foot or so long — (25-30cms.). Frozen bladders take several hours to thaw.

- 1) Assemble bicycle pump, connector, and football valve adaptor together with the bowl of cold water, plastic sheets or aprons, gloves and the helpmate.
- 2) Cut lengths of string as required.
- 3) Sit down facing each other over the bowl of water.
- 4) Select a bladder, insert the football valve in the neck and tie a piece of string very firmly around the pipe of the bladder and around the neck of the valve.
- 5) Support the bladder by the neck by crossing the free ends of the string over the end of the pump and holding in place with the thumb thus:



6) Tie the 2nd string very loosely with a half-hitch around the bottom of the neck and allow the ends to dangle. Your help mate should do this.

7) Inflate the bladder over the bowl of water keeping the bladder moist by dowsing it and perhaps squeezing to fill out those parts not inflating properly. Inflate until right! Right is tight with the skin stretched equally thin all round. A thick bottom hurts the victim of a bladder buffet.

8) At just the right moment your help-mate draws the second string very tight immediately below the head of the football valve adaptor as you ease this out of the neck of the bladder.

If you hold the bladder now between your knees you can take over the tying and complete a reef knot. Then go further up the neck crossing the string and tying two or three times very tightly.

9) Suspend the bladder from a horizontal string (clothes line) in a cool place by the first string which is now redundant as a tie. Hang it where the temperature will not fall too low overnight.

10) Spray the bladder(s) with insecticide aerosol.

11) Next morning or evening according to the state of progress as the thick neck (pipe) is drying out or just before using, tie a 3rd piece of string around the neck. The hole down the middle will open up as the pipe dries out and the bladder will deflate if compressed.

(Remember, if the air temperature rises the tension in the bladder rises and if the air temperature falls the bladder tension will fall and it will crumple. This will not necessarily make the bladder useless).

Bladders improve in bounce and odour as the day and the dance warm up.

12) Use the bladder preferably when dry.

When dry a bladder can be kept indefinitely — (at least 5 years) in a warm dry place. Spray the neck with insecticide again as it dries out.

To reconstitute a stored dried bladder:

- 1) Soak the neck in a bucket of water till soft and malleable — (2-12 hours)
- 2) Carefully remove the strings around the neck.
- 3) Soak the rest of the bladder in warm water until soggy — (few minutes to 2 hours) 3a) Drain out all water carefully.
- 4) Re-inflate as above until tight.
- 5) Dry, etc. as above.

Notes: 1) Bladders are not for the squamish but then neither is foolery. Wives and girlfriends may be less squeamish than other morris men.

2) A bladder may last one buffet or a whole day of 5 or 6 shows.

3) Thick bladders hurt the victim, as does the rope attaching it to the bladder stick and the bladder-stick itself.

4) Dogs and infants react badly to fools and bladders so avoid at all costs.

5) Older children become a menace when excited by fools and bladders. If in a gang they can demolish bladder, fool and themselves in the path of a vehicle.

6) Password — "All together: one at a time!"