

Tips for Using Imitation Porky Guard Hair

by Loren Woerpel

Imitation Porcupine guard hair has recently come about to respond to the dwindling supply and high cost of the real hair. It is made of a synthetic fiber, colored and tapered at the tip and bottom end like the real hair. Some advantages of this imitation hair is that it all comes about 10 inches long and it doesn't have to be cleaned or sorted. To get the shorter lengths for the back of the roach you simply trim it to the length you want.

In general the roach making process is still the same as described in our "The Making of a Porky Roach", booklet and DVD. The change is that you now can always size the front of the roach's hair length to 9 inches. There are some differences in working with this material over the real hair so we are providing you with some tips regarding changes you may want to make in using this product for roach making.

1. Tying up the hair bundles. Unlike real hair where you soak the base of the hair to soften it before tying it, these fibers stay stiff when using them. To compensate for this you need to tie bundles of only 15 to 20 hair strands rather than 20 to 30 used in real hair. To increase tying strength, we suggest you use single strand sinew for tying. Before bending the bottom of each group around the base cord, at 1/2 inch from the fiber's bottom, spread the them along the cord. Now bend the bundle at that point over the base cord, holding them tightly downward with your left hand and thumb. Crimp the fibers at the cord tightly with your right fingernails. A Roundnose jewelry pliers can also be used to flatten the fibers sharply at this spot. Wrap the cord around this bundle pulling the bundle at the cord together with a strong pull and tie the same knot as used with real hair. As you tie this knot, hold the full bundle straight down so it doesn't bend sideways and keep tapping the top of the bundle down onto the cord.

2. Sizing hair lengths. Instead of sorting for the varying lengths needed, with this material you will cut them in the lengths needed. Remember that you need to cut them in lengths 1/2 inch longer then how they will end up in the roach to account for the fold over part. Always trim the imitation hair from the bottom up, as you need to preserve the tip color and tapered points. Because the longer hair for the front is now guaranteed, you can plan a wider full length measurement in the front of the roach than we have available in most real hair bundle sources. We suggest that the bundles used in the tail lengths not be shorter than 5 inches plus the 1/2 inch fold over. That will allow the dark brown color to show over the top of the deer hair row.

3. Shaping and storing your roach. It looks like the best way to shape and store this roach using imitation hair is the same as for the real hair. Wetting the hair though won't help form it. Before you sew on the outside deer hair row, wrap the roach over a wood railing stick. Holding trailer hair at an angle towards the back of the roach, warm the base area of the fiber hair with a hot hair dryer. As you slide toward the bottom, wrap the heated part with your cloth wrap. Continue until completely wrapped. Let cool. May have to do this several times but don't get the fibers too hot as they will melt and curl. Sew on the deer hair row, Wrap the roach on the stick again, smoothing the deer hair toward the tail angle. Wet the roach and let dry. Adjustment of the roach spreader front diameter might be necessary to shape the front when worn.

One other way to form the hair with heat is to use a cooking oven. Wrap the roach up on a wooden stick as discussed above using an elastic bandage wrap. Pre-heat the oven to 200 degrees, then place the roach on the wire rack in the center of the oven with the woven base resting on the rack. Heat for 30 minutes. Take out and let cool before unwrapping. Finish adding the outside deer hair row as discussed above.

4. Amount of hair needed. Because the imitation porky hair fibers are heavier than the real hair, it appears that you will need at least twice the weight of imitation hair than what you used in real hair. As more crafters try this, we will get a better idea of what is needed, but we would suggest buying an ounce more than twice the real hair weight. Having slightly more will allow you to plan a wider front half row than before.



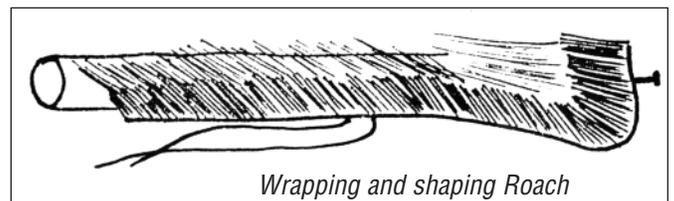
Tying up hair bundles



Also can bend the bundle on the cord with a jewelry pliers.



Sizing hair lengths by cutting from the base up.



Wrapping and shaping Roach