

SSLPR2 Leather Production Operator – Beamhouse

1. Job role

TCF sub-sector	Leather Production
Functional area	Leather Production
Job role	SSLPR2 Leather Production Operator – Beamhouse
Job role description	The Leather Production Operator – Beamhouse prepares raw hides and skins for tanning through soaking, liming, unhairing, fleshing, splitting, deliming, bating and pickling. The role involves hands-on operation of heavy rotating drums, fleshing machines, splitting machines and associated pumping and dosing systems. Operators must understand how mechanical actions and chemical reactions interact to affect hide fibre structure and grain quality. The work is physically demanding and performed in wet, high-risk environments requiring strong mechanical competence and strict adherence to safety procedures.
Performance expectations	• Meet batch throughput targets while maintaining hide integrity • Maintain correct drum speed, float levels, chemical balance and processing time • Operate fleshing and splitting machinery within safe tolerances • Minimise grain damage, uneven processing or mechanical defects • Comply with WHS and chemical handling procedures • Deliver consistently prepared hides to the tanning stage
Specialisation	May specialise in drum operations, fleshing machine operation, splitting operations, or chemical preparation.
Application in other Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) sectors	The mechanical and wet-processing skills developed in beamhouse operations are directly transferable to several sectors within the TCF industry, including: • Textile wet processing (scouring, bleaching, dyeing and finishing) involving operation of large rotating vessels, chemical dosing systems and controlled batch cycles • Textile finishing plants using padding, washing and treatment machinery requiring process timing and chemical balance control • Leather goods manufacturing environments involving hide preparation, conditioning and mechanical trimming • Technical and industrial textile production using batch-processing equipment in high-moisture environments

2. Key tasks and critical work functions

Key tasks	• Load and unload hides safely into beamhouse drums • Monitor and control drum rotation and processing cycles • Operate hydraulic fleshing machines • Operate band-knife splitting machines and adjust thickness settings • Prepare and apply chemical treatments under supervision • Inspect hides for defects and processing irregularities • Clean and maintain beamhouse equipment
Critical work functions	• Safe operation of rotating and cutting machinery • Mechanical adjustment and calibration of equipment • Consistent execution of chemical process stages • Early detection of hide defects or over-processing • WHS compliance in wet, chemical-intensive environments • Effective coordination with curing and tanning teams

3. Technical skills

Rotating drum operation	Operate large beamhouse drums; manage load balance, rotation speed, cycle duration and safe access procedures during loading and unloading.
Fleshing machine operation	Control feed rate, blade pressure and hide positioning to remove tissue without damaging grain.
Splitting machine operation	Set and monitor band-knife thickness settings; ensure consistent hide thickness and blade safety.
Chemical preparation and handling	Measure and introduce liming agents, deliming chemicals and pickling acids safely and accurately.
Process monitoring	Monitor pH levels, temperature, float ratio and time cycles to achieve consistent fibre opening and cleaning.
Mechanical fault recognition	Identify abnormal sounds, vibration, overheating or misalignment in machinery and report promptly.
Preventive maintenance support	Assist with routine cleaning, lubrication and blade inspection under supervision.
Basic documentation*	Record batch completion and material movement; digital systems are emerging but secondary to mechanical skill. *Digital skills are supplementary and emerging.

4. Generic Skills

Teamwork	Works effectively within the beamhouse team and communicates with tanning operators.
Communication	Reports quality issues, equipment faults and safety hazards promptly.
Problem solving	Responds to uneven liming, hide tearing or mechanical irregularities.
Learning	Builds increasing capability in machinery setup and chemical process understanding.
Initiative	Supports yield improvement and waste minimisation efforts.
Service / customer orientation	Recognises that beamhouse preparation directly affects final leather performance and customer requirements.

5. Emerging skills

Emerging skills	• Use of electronic work orders and digital production schedules to confirm batch sequence, hide type and chemical formulation requirements • Interaction with visual display units (VDUs) and touch-screen drum control panels to monitor cycle time, rotation speed, float ratios and process stages • Operation of automated or semi-automated chemical dosing and pumping systems to improve consistency and reduce manual chemical handling • Monitoring of in-process indicators such as pH, temperature and liquor levels using digital sensors and control systems • Application of low-sulphide, enzyme-assisted and other environmentally sustainable beamhouse processes • Increased understanding of water-use efficiency, effluent reduction and environmental compliance requirements • Adaptation to automated hide handling systems and improved machine guarding and safety interlock technologies • Greater traceability requirements linking beamhouse batches to downstream tanning and customer specification
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6. VET Qualifications and Skill Sets

Entry-level preparation	No qualification.
Advanced development	No qualification.

7. Job progression

Possible job progression	Beamhouse Operator → Senior Operator → Team Leader - Beamhouse → Production Supervisor
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8. Classification

Australian Qualifications Framework	AQF Level 2-3
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Skill Levels	Skill Level 4
Open Source Classification of Occupations for Australia (OSCA)	Manufacturing Process Worker - Wet Processing context.



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