CATTLE HIDES IN THE U.S. have different general characteristics depending on where an animal was born, raised and slaughtered in the U.S. In general, hides from a geographic region originate from animals produced and processed in that particular region. However, there are variations to this general rule, as some animals are transported from farms and feedlots in one region to meat packing plants in another region. Therefore, when speaking of U.S. geographical regions, we can say with certainty where the animal was slaughtered, but we cannot 100% guarantee that the animal was born and raised in that same region.

The United States is broken down into six primary geographical regions when referring to American hide production:

- EASTERN
- SOUTHEASTERN
- NORTHERN
- MIDWEST
- SOUTHWEST
- WESTERN
THE EASTERN REGION

This geographic region would include the U.S. states of New York, Pennsylvania, and all New England states. There are, today, two major packing plants in this area, plus a good number of small packer plants slaughtering cattle. All of these plants have the ability to process steers, cows, and bulls, and almost all of the animals processed at these plants are from the same geographic area or from as far away as the Eastern part of the Midwest and as far south as North Carolina. Generally, the hides from this region are Native with no brands and hide substance is a little thinner than the Midwest fed cattle hides. Most of the cattle located in this Eastern region are Holstein cows and beef cows with a small percentage of beef skins.

SOUTHEASTERN REGION

Southeastern states would include North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama. Almost all the meat packers in this region are 100% cow and bull slaughter plants, with only a few steers processed. Generally, packers in this area have relatively small slaughter numbers which range from 200 to 1100 animals a day. Most of the hides produced in this region are lighter weight and slightly smaller than other regions. Also, there is a small percentage of branded hides in the production that can range from 10% to 20%. The grains of the hides from the southeastern region vary from state to state, and generally are considered less desirable than the northern or Midwestern productions.

THE NORTHERN REGION

Most in the industry would consider the Northern region to include the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio. The packing plants in this region generally slaughter both steers and heifers. A good percentage of Holstein steers and cows are included in the mix as well, due to the large number of dairies in the region. Very few, if any, brands can be found in the Northern region’s hides; however, the more west a packer goes to procure cattle, such as into North and South Dakota, the more branded hides they will find. Grains of these hides are considered some of the best in the United States.

THE MIDWEST REGION

For the most part, the hides produced in the Midwest region are from the top quality fed cattle slaughter plants located in Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas. Hides from the Midwest provide the most consistent quality year round. Again, as meat packers move further west and south in this region to obtain cattle, the more brands are encountered. The majority of the cattle produced in the Midwest region consist of fed steers and heifers.

THE SOUTHWEST REGION

The states of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Colorado comprise the Southwest region. While most of the hides produced from slaughter plants in these states are branded, there is a small number (20% to 30%) that are Native unbranded hides. The Southwest region, along with the Midwest region, have the largest supplies of cattle on feed and the largest slaughter numbers in the U.S. Some of the larger packing plants have a slaughter capacity of 6,000 head per day! Cattle in the Southwest region are primarily located in feedlots and are fed steers and heifers.

THE WESTERN REGION

The states in the Western region include Arizona, California, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington. Some of these states produce excellent hides, such as fed Holstein steer hides, that have some of the best quality grains in the United States. For the most part, the western hides have a brand percentage of about 30% to 50%. Even with the brand content, the Western region hides command premiums due to the better grains (more A and B graded leathers) that tanners prefer. Cattle from the Western region consist of farm-raised steers and cows as well as fed steers and heifers. California remains the largest Holstein cow producer in the U.S.