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1091 Utilization of skin of 'Koth', *Otolithoides biauritus* - a new fish by-product

Due to the ever-increasing demand for leather products, alternative sources are constantly being explored. The skin of rays is used for a long time as an excellent source of leather though it is expensive due to its high durability. The skin of the ray, *Dasyatis uarnak* (banded whip-tail stingray) is expensive due to its attractive colour and intricate patterns. Of late the skin of *Koth* and *Ghol* is used as an alternative source of leather. The skin of *Koth* is preferred over that of other fishes due to its small scales, which gives the finished leather product a better look. Usually medium sized fishes are used for this purpose.

At New Ferry Wharf, the catch of *Koth* is abundant throughout the year. The dominant species landed is *Otolithoides biauritus*. The size of the fish usually ranges

between 90 and 115 cm. Professional peelers remove the skin of the fish at the landing centre itself. Care is taken, while separating the skin from the flesh so as not to damage either the skin or the flesh. The flesh is then cut into pieces for easy transportation. The fish bone also fetches good price.

Salt is applied on the collected skins and kept for a day or two, after which it is washed gently to remove the scales. Care is taken to retain the natural existing scale pattern. The skin is then further processed and the finished product is used in the manufacture of purses, belts etc.

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