

FOOTWEAR TECHNOLOGY: LUNDHAGS

When high-end Swedish outdoor footwear brand Lundhags heard about Terracare leather produced by Josef Heinen, it identified immediately with the concept it aims to put across. You can make high-quality leather and care for the environment at the same time, and you can take pride in putting this message across to retailers and consumers.

Boot brand identifies with Terracare leather

Lundhags, a high-end outdoor footwear brand from Sweden, announced at the start of 2015 that it had chosen Bergamo Terracare leather from German tanning company Josef Heinen for the uppers in a new heritage collection of boots. The collection goes on sale to the public for the autumn-winter 2015-2016 season. It comprises five styles, each made with what Lundhags calls "great attention to detail and craftsmanship".

Head footwear designer, Niklas Karlsson, has said the collection pays homage to Lundhags' almost 80-year history of quality products, although it also uses a new last and a new style of outsole. Mr Karlsson has said the Bergamo leather appeals to him because of its dark and oily surface. He adds: "It perfectly fits the finish that we wanted to give the Heritage collection."

Lundhags has been using leather from Josef Heinen in almost all of its footwear for about four years. Mats-Håkan Lundhag, whose grandfather (a shoemaker named Jonas Lundhag) founded the brand in 1932, is now its product manager for footwear. He explains that the connection between Lundhags and Heinen happened by chance at an exhibition in Germany. "I was not there to find

Lundhags boots are made to withstand Nordic weather in all seasons.

 Lundhags



materials," he recalls, "but we met and had a very good conversation about leather and it grew from there."

Questions about chrome

He says that "just once or twice a year" Lundhags was having to respond to questions from consumers about skin complaints, which people inside and outside the company linked to the leather. At that time, it was sourcing leather from a tannery in Portugal, which is where its footwear manufacturing partners are. Specifically, Mr Lundhag says there were concerns about chrome. "Leather and how it is made were not areas of great interest for me in the past," he explains, "but around that time we started a project internally to look at chrome-free alternatives so I was thinking about this subject a lot, and the more I read about it, the more I realised that chrome is not the whole story and that a response that only says 'chrome is dangerous' is an inadequate response. I met Thomas Heinen, current managing director of Josef Heinen, we started talking about this and I learned a lot."

Footwear at Lundhags means outdoor boots, mostly with a rubber base and a full-grain leather shaft, varying in length from the 29 centimetres of the Forest model to the 18 centimetres of the Contessa WS Mid. Hand-made and rugged enough to withstand Scandinavian weather in all seasons, they are high-end, expensive items, with starting prices well above €200 per pair. Mats-Håkan Lundhag calculates that 90% of the shafts in the brand's total annual production of around 16,000 pairs are now made from Terracare leather from Heinen, with the other 10% being made from splits.

To help shoe companies respond to consumers' desires

Terracare leather is the brand name that Josef Heinen now applies to all its finished leather, saying that the name defines its production standards: environmentally-friendly, resource-



Leathers in the Terracare range are produced using as little water and energy as possible.

 Lundhags

efficient and socially compatible, using raw materials from a well known and carefully monitored source – its own backyard in Germany. It started work on the Terracare idea towards the end of the last decade. When Josef Heinen featured in the inaugural global Tannery of the Year competition, winning a Highly Commended award for Europe in 2010, it said Terracare came about because it wanted to help footwear brands respond to consumers' desire for more environmentally friendly shoes. It felt a new brand name, with labels and hang-tags, would help its customers understand better how it makes leather. For example, in the four years between 2003 and 2007, in the build-up to the launch of Terracare, Josef Heinen managed to cut the amount of water it consumed in its production by more than 70% and direct energy consumption by more than 80%. Now it offers three sections in the range: Terracare, "manufactured according to strict environmental and social standards"; Terracare Zero CO₂, sales of which generate money for



German tannery Josef Heinen launched Terracare about eight years ago to help footwear brands respond to consumers' desire for more environmentally friendly shoes.

 WTP

reforestation programmes and Terracare Zero Chrome, produced according to Terracare standards, but without chrome.

The tanning company feels the concept will appeal to customers who share its "views and passions". This certainly proved true with Lundhags. Mats-Håkan Lundhag says he likes Josef Heinen's 120-years of history, its independence and its commitment to using and improving traditional processes; he wonders out loud why anyone would want to use four times more water than was absolutely necessary. "I like the whole idea behind Terracare," he says, "all the environmental and social thinking. It's in line with our own values." For example, Lundhags, too, has a programme in place to support forests, specifically old-growth forests in Sweden.

recognised the name and some of them knew about the Terracare programme too." He explains that Lundhags will start to put Terracare labels, with a short text to introduce the concept and a link to Heinen's dedicated Terracare website, onto its boots from this summer onwards. The brand's footwear product manager makes no apologies for adding to the amount of information consumers receive when buying the boots. "I think we should be proud of what we are doing," he says.

Open to openness

Before the Terracare decision, Mr Lundhag recalls earlier attempts in Sweden to agree on an environmental index for the shoe industry there, but says many of the retail buyers initially involved in the project were reluctant to bring the intricacy of some of their supply chain relationships in Asia completely into the open. Working with a leather supplier in northern Germany is less complex. Thomas Heinen has travelled to Sweden to take part in extensive training sessions to help build up knowledge internally among Lundhags staff of what Terracare means and why it's different, and Lundhags has built on this, focusing on how its own team can best explain this difference to retailers and consumers.

"Some retailers were familiar with Josef Heinen already," Mr Lundhag says. "They



Swedish outdoor footwear brand Lundhags says it's proud of the values Terracare leather projects.

 Lundhags