



What to Expect on a Spread Oaks Waterfowl Hunt

Spread Oaks Ranch offers a full range of Texas riverine to prairie waterfowl hunting. Teal, gadwalls, and pintails are our staple species with subordinate wood ducks and mallards. Some years we have good sandhill crane opportunities and even snipe over decoys, but success with these hunts is variable. We offer them only as a “bonus” to your duck hunting adventures.

A morning duck hunt begins the evening before, when our staff reviews your guest’s licenses and discusses safety and hunt logistics. About an hour before sunrise on the morning of the hunt, you will meet in the gun room adjacent to the main lodge. Here, you’ll gear up for the journey to the field, and return in time for breakfast.

The best way for the Spread Oaks staff to deliver a hunt to your expectations is for you to communicate what they are. Think about your hunt from your guide’s point of view. We scout all the ponds and usually know if we have 25 good locations or, for example, only two. From this, we can better advise your hunting options when we know the following:

- 1) **The number in your booked party that will be hunting waterfowl.** We schedule the number of guides to the number of hunters in a party. Knowing that number allows us to schedule enough guides to meet your needs.

- 2) **Your party's experience level.** We encourage and can accommodate the inexperienced, the non-hunter, family members, or most anyone who wants to participate in or witness the hunt. Let us know. We also cater to the most ardent of waterfowlers. Let us know.
- 3) **Your preferences on the number of hunters in each blind.** We traditionally make recommendations to the party leader about the best number of people to a blind. On slower days, we often hunt 2 to 3 shooters per blind, but if a spot simply fills up with birds we'll recommend as many as 5. These are only recommendations. Some guests prefer to combine their party – we have had as many as 8 together in separate portable blinds or large, permanent blinds at the same location. We try to accommodate requests, and we will tell you when and why if we cannot.
- 4) **The level of “difficulty” you and your guests expect from your hunt.** We really do have something for everyone. Most often, we go the birds. That means we build portable blinds before nearly every hunt to respond to constantly changing bird patterns. These portable blinds might be in the water, or mud, or on a dry levee. Tell us your preference – dry and easy, or a bit more challenging and muddier. In addition to portable blinds, we offer places to hunt that require little more than a pair of rubber boots in comfortable pit, permanent, or levee blinds. You won't walk more than a few feet, and your feet don't touch the water. Yes, there are many times when you will shoot fewer ducks than a harder hunt, but not always. The flip side is the dedicated waterfowlers. For those, we can provide hunts at locations that require waders, a walk in the mud or through the timber, or with temporary blinds or no blinds at all. Again, we can do a better job if we know your expectations.
- 5) **The number of guests who would like to take ducks home.** Here's how our duck cleaning service works. We provide breasts with the skin on and a wing (required by federal law) with a duck tag. Typically, we combine tagged and cleaned birds 6 to a bag. We prefer you bring your own cooler for transport, but we do have portable coolers and/or thermal bags. Usually, on the last day of your hunt, we provide birds from another, previous hunting group. That is because it takes from 3 to 6 hours to clean ducks, and we rarely complete this before checkout time. You are encouraged to pluck your own birds if you like. Also, it is possible to ship birds on your behalf, but it is expensive. Please let us

know in advance so we can provide a quote. We can, however, help you with the logistics of handling any birds you wish to take a taxidermist with no advance notification.

Guns and Ammo. Spread Oaks Ranch provides over-and-under 12-gauge shotguns for those who do not want to transport their own. We also provide one box of 12-gauge or 20-gauge 3” steel shot ammunition per guest per hunt at no extra cost. If you are more comfortable with extra shells, or your gun only handles shells chambered for 2 ¾”, or are using another gauge, or prefer other shot types (i.e., bismuth, tungsten, etc.) you will need to bring your own ammunition.

Gear. We provide waterproof boxes to use from the gun room to the field. The ranch also keeps rubber boots in adult sizes and has a limited supply of “backup” waders, hip boots, and rain jackets. For those who wish to bring their own gear, consider bringing the following:

1. Waders, hip boots, and/or rubber boots.
2. Foul weather gear: rain jacket, water resistant pants, cold weather jacket.
3. Concealment: camo caps, coats, jackets, gloves, face masks, etc.
4. Misc.: Headlamp, high quality hearing protection, shooting glasses, etc.
5. Your favorite shotgun(s).
6. Game bag/backpack.

Licenses. You will be responsible for a valid Texas hunting license with state and federal migratory bird endorsements, HIP certification, and proof of hunter safety course (see separate license document).

Safety. Spread Oaks’ number one priority is the safety of our guests and staff. Safety is just as much your responsibility as it is ours, meaning do not hesitate to bring anything that makes you uncomfortable to anyone’s attention, whether on staff or not. Guidelines in the field are as follows:

1. Listen to your guide’s safety talk.
2. Guns are to remain in cases until guide gives the go ahead.

3. Breeches are to remain open at all times until guide gives the OK to load.
4. Check gun is unloaded before entering or leaving blind/field.
5. Be sure your guide has made you aware of your safe shooting lanes ***and follow them.***
6. All guns in blind must be pointed up and away from others in blind.
7. Keep gun safety on at all times.
8. Guides call the shots unless you are advised to the contrary.
9. Never swing a gun across or over an adjacent shooter.
10. When dogs are working and/or guide is out of blind there is to be no shooting.
11. Your guide is encouraged to stop the hunt if safety protocols are not followed.

To discuss the details of your hunt, contact Rob Sawyer at rob@spreadoaksranch.com or 713-494-4866. Texts and emails are best, but phone calls will be returned usually by the end of each day.