

Quality Upland Gamebird Hunting by Michael Pearce

Since its inception in 1983, thousands, maybe millions of words have been used to describe Ringneck Ranch. None, however, could better define the operation than "quality." Of course no one who's familiar with its background would expect any different.

In the Houghton family since the 1870's, when the Cheyenne and the herds of buffalo still roamed central Kansas, the ranch, that sits isolated in a pristine prairie valley, has been home to some of the most respected men and women in the state. Its cattle and farming operation were long benchmarks for their industries. The same can be said for its modern-day hunting.

Owned and operated by Keith & Debra Houghton, the hunting operation covers 10,000 acres of the finest native pheasant, bobwhite quail and prairie chicken habitat imaginable. Coverts are managed with both the hunted and hunter in mind, ranging from easily traversed thin strips of weeds to sprawling fields of chest high CRP grasses.

To further opportunities for their clientele, the Houghtons have established several broad sections of ground where gunners can enjoy beyond regular state-regulated seasons and limits. A supplementation program, using Ringneck Ranch's sleek custom stock, is also in place to further ensure consistent success.

More than quality gunning

But the Houghtons know that it takes more than just quality gunning to impress today's serious wingshooters. That's why the staff and accommodations are on par with the phenomenal gunning.

Hunting parties are kept small, for safety's sake, and all are lead afield by one of Ringneck Ranch's competent, handpicked, gunless guides. Rather than grabbing just any young local hunter to steer guests, the Houghtons have an enthusiastic group of guides who are successful farmers, local businessmen, or commercial and military pilots when they're not at Ringneck Ranch. These same men pride themselves in showing clients some of the best bird dogs in the area, including Brittanies, Vizslas, German Shorthairs, Wirehairs and most other popular sporting breeds.

Unusual for most midwestern wingshooting establishments, accommodations are right amid the gunning grounds, with opportunities for every size and type of group. Ranch headquarters peacefully sits nearly a mile from the nearest public road, at the base of the rolling hills that are covered with the same native grasses God created. Many corporations, including several Fortune 500 companies, utilize the huge main guest lodge as a place to entertain clients. Smaller groups, like those of just a few friends, family members, or husband and wife, can take advantage of smaller, secluded furnishings where privacy is certainly guaranteed.

Country gourmet

No matter how large your group, you enjoy the same legendary cuisine. Through the years the cooks at Ringneck Ranch have developed a menu that can best be described as "country gourmet." For instance, there will be fist-thick, marinated pork chops, baked pheasant with wine sauce, and an old-fashioned beef roast with all the trimmings. All meals are served family-style with plenty for seconds. Desserts have to be tasted to be believed. Naturally accommodations can be made for those with special dietary needs. As is the way at Ringneck Ranch, it will always be done with a smile.

But when you get right down to it, it's those smiles and the people who wear them that are the reason Ringneck Ranch has a sky-high percentage of repeat clientele. Many who've been there claim they feel they came as customers the first time, and as good friends every time following.

There's only one word that can describe an establishment that can make total strangers feel so comfortable, happy and at home—you guessed it—quality!