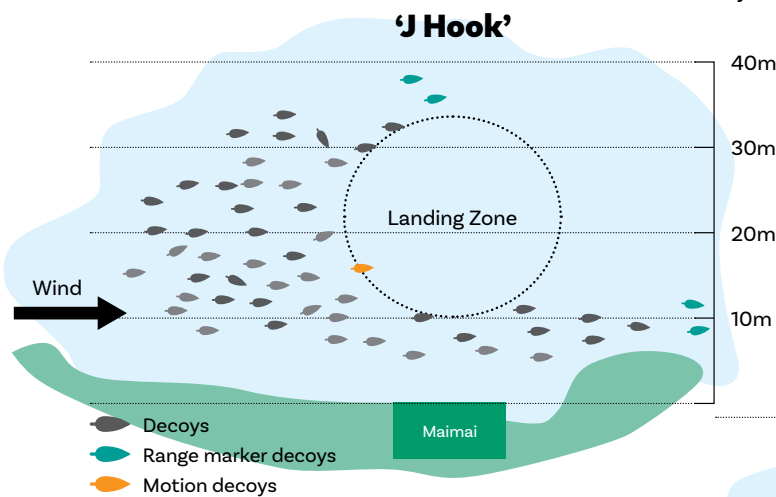


Decoy Spreads 101

A lot of hunters think that you can just throw some decoys out within range, and expect the ducks to come right on in. While this may work in some situations, duck hunting can usually be a lot more effective if some time is taken to consider a suitable spread. While there is any number of possibilities, the 'J Hook' and 'Classic U' are both basic and versatile spreads which many hunters use effectively on all types of waterfowl on big water, ponds and in the field.

There are also a few important factors to consider before setting decoys.

- 1. Decoy Numbers** – This is very situation dependant. For example, on a small pond maybe half a dozen decoys will be adequate, whereas if you are competing for birds on big water it is often a case of more is better. In many public hunting situations for opening weekend four dozen decoys would be a minimum. When hunting pressure decreases after the first week or so, one or two dozen decoys will often be enough to create an effective spread.
- 2. Wind** – Ducks always like to land into the wind, so for the best shooting opportunities try to get the breeze from either side or behind.
- 3. Landing Zone** – It is very important to create an open landing zone. It should be completely accessible so ducks don't have to fly over any decoys to get to it.
- 4. Motion Decoys** – Typically ducks that are committed to decoys will key in on motion decoys. For this reason motion decoys should be placed well within shotgun range in the landing zone. If motion decoys are placed on the upwind edge of the landing zone, it will encourage ducks to sweep all the way across the zone, maximizing shooting opportunity.
- 5. Be Flexible** – Things don't always go according to plan. If ducks are not coming into your landing zone, be prepared to change things around based on how they are approaching your spread. Sometimes it only takes relocating a few decoys to get the birds to commit.



The 'J Hook'. In this spread the wind is blowing from left to right. The plan is to have the birds entering the landing zone from right to left.

The 'Classic U'. In this spread the wind is blowing from behind. The plan is to have the birds approaching the landing zone from straight out in front.

