



Know Before You Go

IMPORTANT TAXIDERMY CONSIDERATIONS

Ensuring that you're happy with the taxidermied mount of your trophy begins before the hunt ever begins—when you talk to an outfitter about his facilities and the skills of his staff. When researching an outfitter, ask if his guides have the ability to cape out your trophy for shipping to your taxidermist and if the outfitter will ship for you, or if you will need to take the trophy with you or arrange your own shipping. Some outfitters are reluctant to ship for clients for liability reasons, which means you're going to have to make arrangements with a shipper or lug the packaged cape or head onto your flight home as checked baggage.

Most importantly, make sure the outfitter has the facilities to cool or freeze your trophy until it is ready to ship. Talk to your taxidermist about how you should package the hide, hide and head, or entire body in the case of turkeys, birds or certain trophies before the trip. Most will have detailed instructions on how to pack and ship it to keep it in the best shape possible for mounting.

When Hunting Outside the U.S.

When hunting out of the country, talk to the outfitter to see if he will help with all of the permits that need to be completed before shipping hides or game animals back into the United States. Forms with U.S. Customs, the USDA, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service will all need to be completed before hides or already taxidermied animals can be released to the owner. For some species that receive governmental protections in some parts of the world, but are legal game in others, a CITES permit may also need to be completed. Your outfitter will know which species require these permits.

When sending untreated hides or game animals into the country, you will have to use a USDA-approved taxidermist to keep them under quarantine for several months. You can then use that taxidermist to do the work or have the hides sent to your taxidermist of choice, but check first with the USDA-certified taxidermist. Some will only accept hides that they will get to mount.

Because of longer shipping and quarantine periods when shipping from out of the country, the outfitter's guides will need to know how to properly turn and salt hides so they don't begin breaking down or losing hair before the taxidermist can get to them.

Additional Considerations

When hunting out of the country, do you use a taxidermist in the country where you're hunting or are you better off sending the hides to one in the states?

Morris says while there are a lot of great taxidermists around the world, there are some considerations hunters need to consider. One, shipping hides back into the country takes less crating than shipping completed mounts, which translates into less expensive shipping costs. Where different languages are concerned, making sure everyone is on the same page can be a challenge as well. Finally, if you want to make a change after the order has been placed, making a local call within the states will be much less hassle and cost than having to make an international call to an often very different time zone.