



# BIG RACK RANCH



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Big Rack Ranch is 2,000 beautiful acres located in Poetry, Texas, and was established by way of Robert Williams. This was Robert's original breeding ranch and was established in 1986. The 860 plus acres was purchased from Robert by Tom Swift in 1994, and the deer herd was divided in half. Tom had been hunting at the ranch for a few years before he asked Robert if he was interested in selling. As Robert would say, "Everything is for sale". Along with the purchase of the ranch, a breeder buck named Bones was included. The ranch had four breeding pens set up on fifty acres. In 1998, John True went to work for Tom Swift in Dallas to manage his real estate investment company. Hunting whitetails was always a huge part of John's life, so when John took over the ranch operations for Tom it was a dream come true to have the chance to breed deer. John was an avid hunter with his Dad at their low fence deer lease in Albany, Texas, where he still hunts today with his two little boys. He enjoys working with the deer at Big Rack, and the challenge that it brings. Over the years Tom has purchased another 1100 or so acres to make Big Rack Ranch over 2,000 acres.

It started merely as a hobby and a way to liberate selected bucks and does out to the main ranch. After breeding a closed herd for a few years, they decided that it would be a good idea to buy some new does to breed. John said he made the same

mistake that most breeders make when starting out and bought the cheapest does he could find. After seeing the production from the does that were purchased, the decision to start the process over was made. DNA analysis was now available, and it was a game changer. John sat down with Tom to discuss plans about how they were going to move forward. They agreed to set up a partnership to start generating revenue as a business and still be able to release new and improved genetics out to his main ranch. John decided to take his time to visit as many farms as possible to see which genetic line he liked the most. His goal was to be able to consistently produce big, wide and framey typical bucks with some character.

John says the best decision he ever made was going to visit The Refuge. He said, "Chris McSpadden showed me things I had never seen or thought of before. I loved his deer, his pen layout, and most of all his record keeping concerning the production of his animals. He went out of his way to explain to me the process of breeding whitetails – from selecting which does to start with based upon the desired overall look, to deciding which buck to breed them to, and ultimately having a breeding plan in place for the offspring from those breedings."

John said that Big Rack Ranch started out small and



## FEATURED BREEDER

purchased the best does that they could afford. He loved the typical look that RW Trophy Ranch was producing at the time, and liked the idea of having some of Robert's best does in the anchor position of the pedigree that he could build upon. RW's main breeder bucks at the time were Bambi 20-28, Monarch and Daggerdrop. John's favorite was Monarch. He said he wanted proven production so he focused on the maternal anchor spot in pedigrees, and was able to purchase three daughters out of Red 55, who is Monarch's dam. John said, "I also bought a few does from The Refuge that were built to produce the kind of deer that I ultimately wanted." Through Chris McSpadden, John learned how to correctly line breed, and when to outcross. Big Rack Ranch had started to accumulate a good number of does that were ripe for an outcross, so John started looking for not only the right semen, but also the right back up buck. John saw the production from Gonzalez Whitetails and loved that Fred's pedigrees had very little in common with his. He was able to purchase Kid Dynamite from Dwain Bankston, who owns Yoledigo Whitetails. Kid Dynamite, who is out of Max and the famous Blue 510 (dam to Kid Dynamite, Max Dream, Dreambo and ATM) was exactly what he was looking for

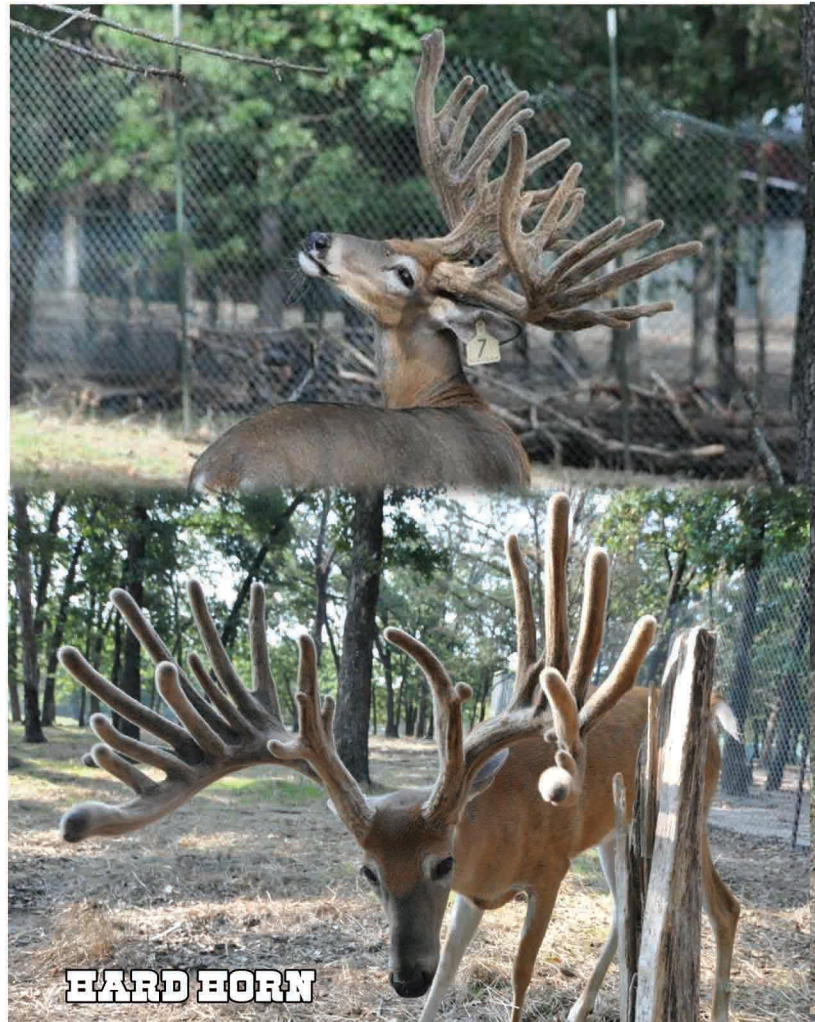
— an outcross with early maturing genetics while keeping a typical look — a perfect combination. Another buck that was catching John's attention was a 2Wide buck fawn that came from The Refuge. The buck they named Dos Ancho quickly became part of their breeding plan. He was a beautiful yearling and two years old, and the decision was made to breed him in his third year to see how his production would turn out. "The results have been amazing so far, with his first set of offspring turning three years old in 2014 and averaging over 230" B&C with wide open frames", John says.

John is a scientific breeder and collects as much data as he can but he has learned that building a pedigree is not the only way you can improve your herd. The last couple of years Big Rack Ranch has used goats as surrogate mothers instead of bottle feeding every fawn. As soon as the baby goats are weaned each mama goat gets two fawns assigned to her, they will stay with that goat close to 90 days. This type of 'bottle feeding' makes the fawns gentle and is cost efficient. It is a scientific process to get goats and deer bred on a schedule that are perfectly synced together.

John, with the help of ranch foreman Pooh Dennis, has



**DOS ANCHO**



**HARD BORN**



## FEATURED BREEDER

just recently upgraded Big Rack's fawn barn, the new space is connected to an existing barn and can house close to 40 goats and 60 fawns. The fawns are not only protected from the elements but can also watch TV while in their pens. Pooh has installed TVs in the barn that play on a loop so that the fawns can have some stimulation while they are alone. Keeping these fawns dry can be a challenge due to the ranch's elevation and because of the short distance to Lake Tawakoni. The ranch stays wet almost all year round, a problem that most breeders would love to have. Pooh has had a great impact on upgrading Robert's old levee system and designing new flood gaps that need little attention. John, Pooh, and the rest of the staff at Big Rack Ranch love when they can see their hard work produce fruit such as Ace of Blades 251" at 3, Hard Horn 266 at 3 and their upcoming yearlings.

John concludes by saying, "The deer breeding industry continues to fascinate me on an annual basis. It is so fun deciding which latest and greatest buck should breed certain does, but I believe that every farm should have a breeding plan in place based upon the desired look and goals that they are trying to achieve. It takes years of learning what works through trial and error, and the reward is worth the wait. My breeding plan has stayed the same throughout the years. I want to consistently grow giant bucks with a typical frame that have 'the look'. You always want to see the results immediately, but it takes time to truly see the production of an animal, buck or doe. I'm proud to be involved in this business and hope to continue for years to come."



**ACE OF BLADES**