

# W hat does it take to be a successful deer breeder?

I recently posed that question to Mark Doering of Classic Canyon Ranch. He quickly replied; "It takes lots of time, effort, money and luck!!! Lots of good luck that is!" Although he does not yet consider himself to be a top breeder, he does feel he is making progress due to these key things.



## FEATURED BREEDER

Mark started his breeding operation in 2005 with three breeder pens and no working or handling facility. Back then darting was the only way to handle his deer and AI was an unknown. Bucks were the focus and doe pedigrees were spotty at best. DNA was just beginning. All of this has changed quickly at Classic Canyon Ranch, with 14 breeder pens now, deer handling facility, all the does being AI'd, every deer DNA tested and the focus shifting to the doe genetics!!! What a transition in just a few years.

Doering admits he greatly underestimated the costs of being a successful breeder, but as luck would have it, he had other sources of income during the formative years of his operation. After making the mistake of not focusing on doe genetics, he has now acquired some impressive doe lines, including several daughters from the dams of Gladiator, 2-Wide, Swagger, Monarch Classic, Big Bob, Bambi Remington and WOW. These lines all exhibit the look that Classic Canyon is striving for. He calls it the Classic look - big wide open frames with a more typical clean balanced look.

He points out that it also took time to learn how to be a successful breeder. Much more time than he expected. If he had to do it over again, he says he would have listened closer to other breeders and learned from their mistakes, not from making them himself! He feels he has now developed some close personal relationships with other top breeders and can rely on advice and help from them.

On the effort part, Mark says this deer breeding is the most challenging business venture he has ever attempted. Although he has an aerospace engineering (rocket science) degree and has enjoyed success in the oil and gas industry, the deer breeding business has more variables, unknowns and seems to be changing faster than anything he has experienced before. Doering says that if it were not for his love of the deer and the excitement of all the changes and challenges, it could get very discouraging. He likes to say "this business is not rocket science, it is much more difficult".

Good luck along the way has certainly helped. Mark bought a square on a Board at a deer convention for a chance to win a doe fawn. He won and that \$100 ticket ended up giving him the womb sister of Swagger, a beautiful buck at The Refuge that has the "Classic Look". Just recently, he bought a doe in a Deer Breeders Corp auction that included a chance to win a yearling doe in a drawing. Good luck smiled again and he won a great young doe out of the full sister of Bambi Remington. On the other side of the luck equation, he recalls backing out of a deal to purchase a doe based on a report that she just didn't look well. She has since produced four great offspring all worth much more than the doe did originally. He also recounted all the really good deer that he has had die in new and novel ways, including one doe that swallowed a dart!



## FEATURED BREEDER

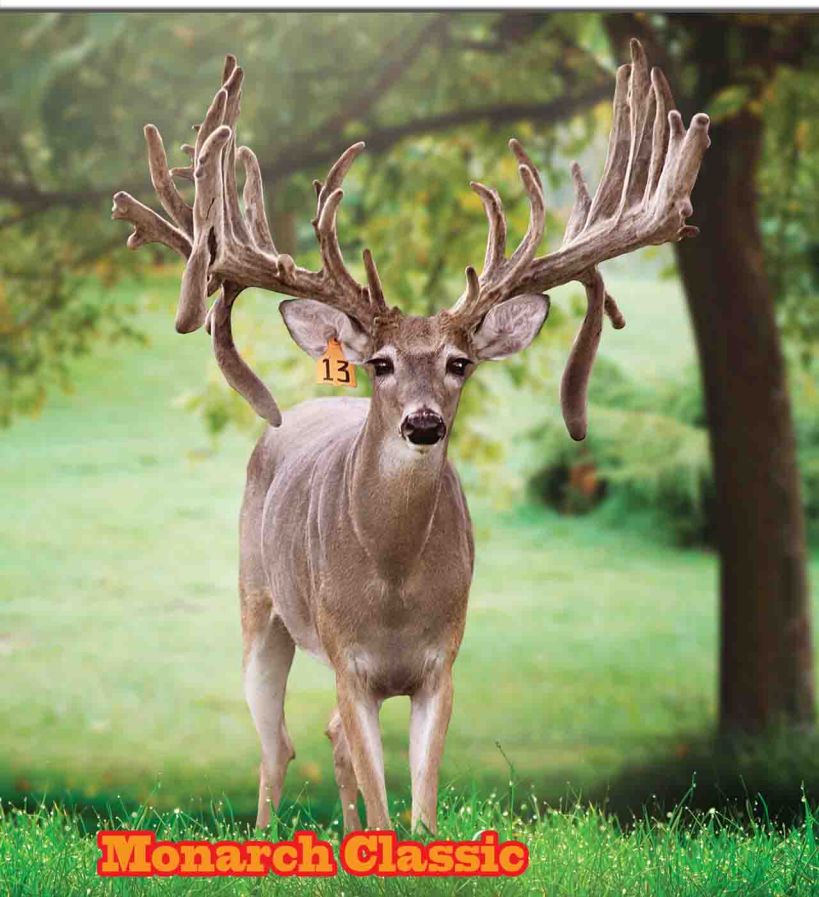
Mark said he was very lucky to acquire a 50% interest in Monarch Classic from RW Trophy Ranch back when he was a 276" three year old. This past year Monarch Classic blew up to 376" and won the Golden Buck of the year award. Mark also acquired a 25% interest in Monarch Supreme, a beautiful 300" typical deer with the "Classic" look. These two bucks, plus several of his other young breeder bucks, are shown here. Also shown are several of those famous bucks from those key doe lines Classic Canyon is now building upon. They all tend to exhibit the look that he has strived for from the beginning. In fact, when he first set up his web site years ago, he trade-marked the logo "Trophy Whitetails with the Classic Look". Mark says he think this is the ultimate challenge for a breeder - to breed for a consistent big, but cleaner typical look. He hopes Classic Canyon Ranch is on its way to developing their own line of unique genetics that can produce this type of deer on a consistent basis.

The 655-acre Classic Canyon Ranch is located west of Waco near the little town of Mosheim. During my recent visit, it seemed like a little slice of Texas heaven. With beautiful cliffs, caves, creek bottoms, large pecans trees and open spaces, it has a Texas hill country warmth about it. Mark's family loves spending time together at the ranch. Thanksgiving is a special time since all gather for the holiday and join in AI'ing the does, which is traditionally scheduled for

the Friday after Thanksgiving. It is a family affair centered around deer breeding and deer hunting. Michael, Mark's son, can be seen at all the deer conventions along with his wife Susan and their son Andrew. Michael is the Sales Manager at Classic Canyon Ranch and Susan is a veterinarian and her help is always appreciated. Andrew, at age four, is a deer breeder in-training. Mark's other kids, Angela, Cassie and Rob, all love to visit the ranch frequently to get away from the city life. Mark's fondest childhood memories are of hunting with his dad. He hopes the same will be true for his children and grandchildren.

Mark is very interested in cultivating the youth who will be the future of our industry. He currently chairs the Deer Breeder Corp Scholarship committee and hires several interns in the summer to work with the newborn fawns. During our visit, he introduced me to Tyler, a 22 year old he is teaching about our industry with the hope it will become his career choice.

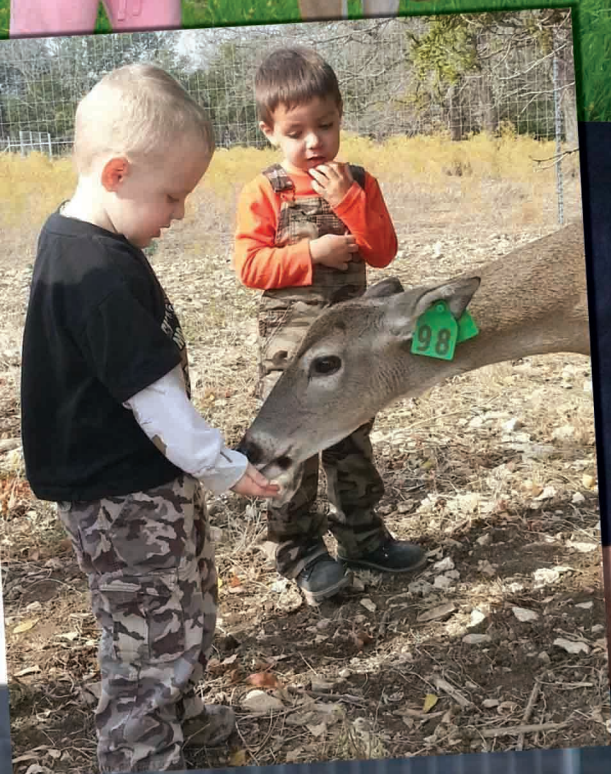
Classic Canyon uses summer youth assistants to imprint the fawns during their first three days of life. So twice a day for 30 minutes each time, the fawn gets held and talked to. After these six sessions, those fawns tend to become less afraid of humans and are hard to tell from the bottle-raised fawns as far as calmness. Mark says it is harder to get his young help to sit still for 30 minutes with each fawn than it is to get the fawns to be still. He thinks this is invaluable to both.



# FEATURED BREEDER



The love of the animals was obvious during my visit as the deer in the pens ran up to the Polaris wanting a treat. Also deer outside the pens shocked me by also wanting treats, including a couple of "wild" 10+ point bucks. All the deer were very big and healthy looking. A recent group of 15 three year olds that were sold averaged 230 pounds, with several weighing over 270 pounds. Several scored over 250", with the average score being 205" and having that Classic Look. Mark is really thrilled that he and his family have been given the opportunity to be stewards of this beautiful ranch and these deer for a time. He is super excited about his breeding plans for this fall and like all of us, is looking forward to next year!



**Classic Nathan**



**Classic Caleb**



**Dr. WOW**



**Classic Canaan**