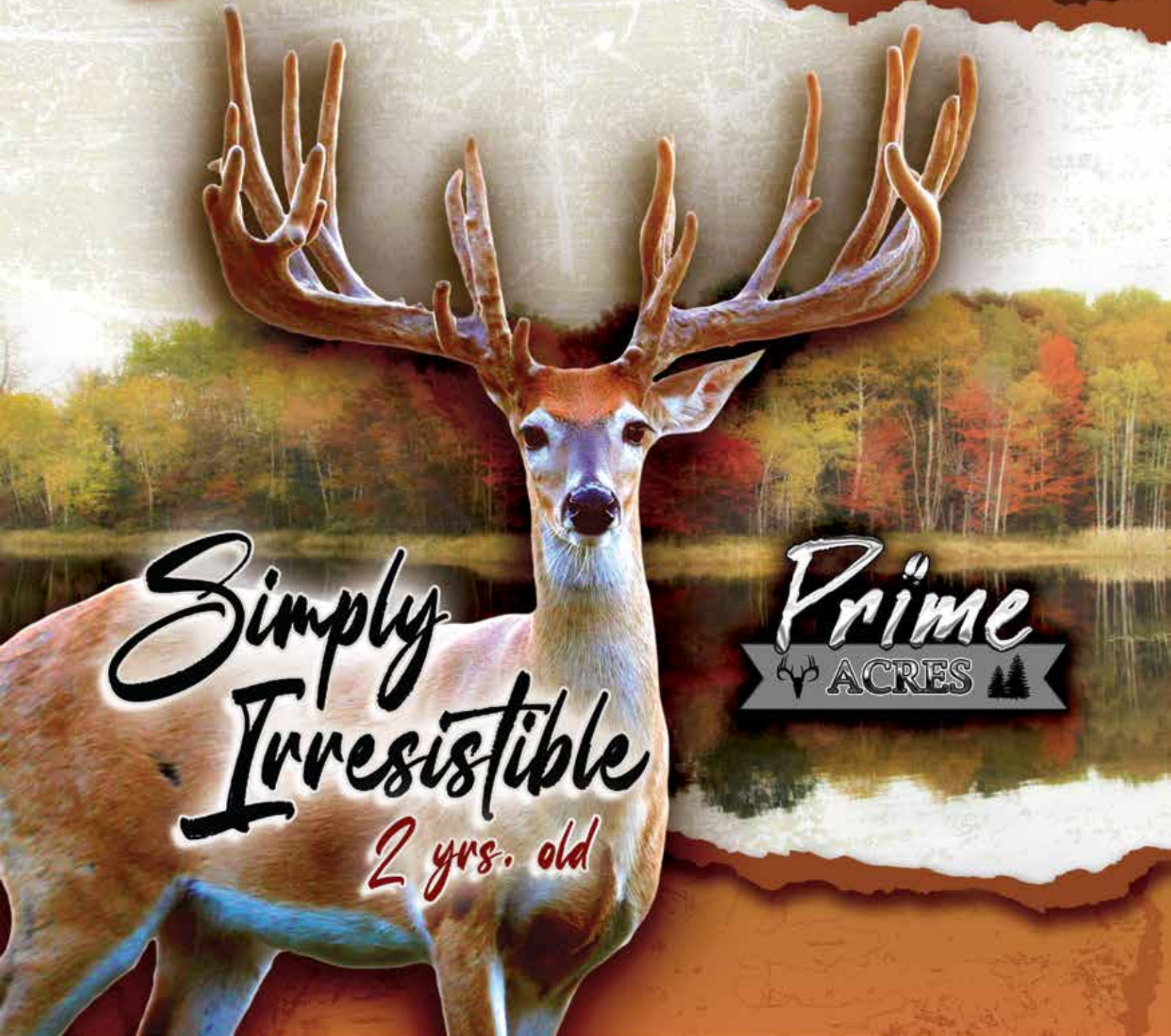




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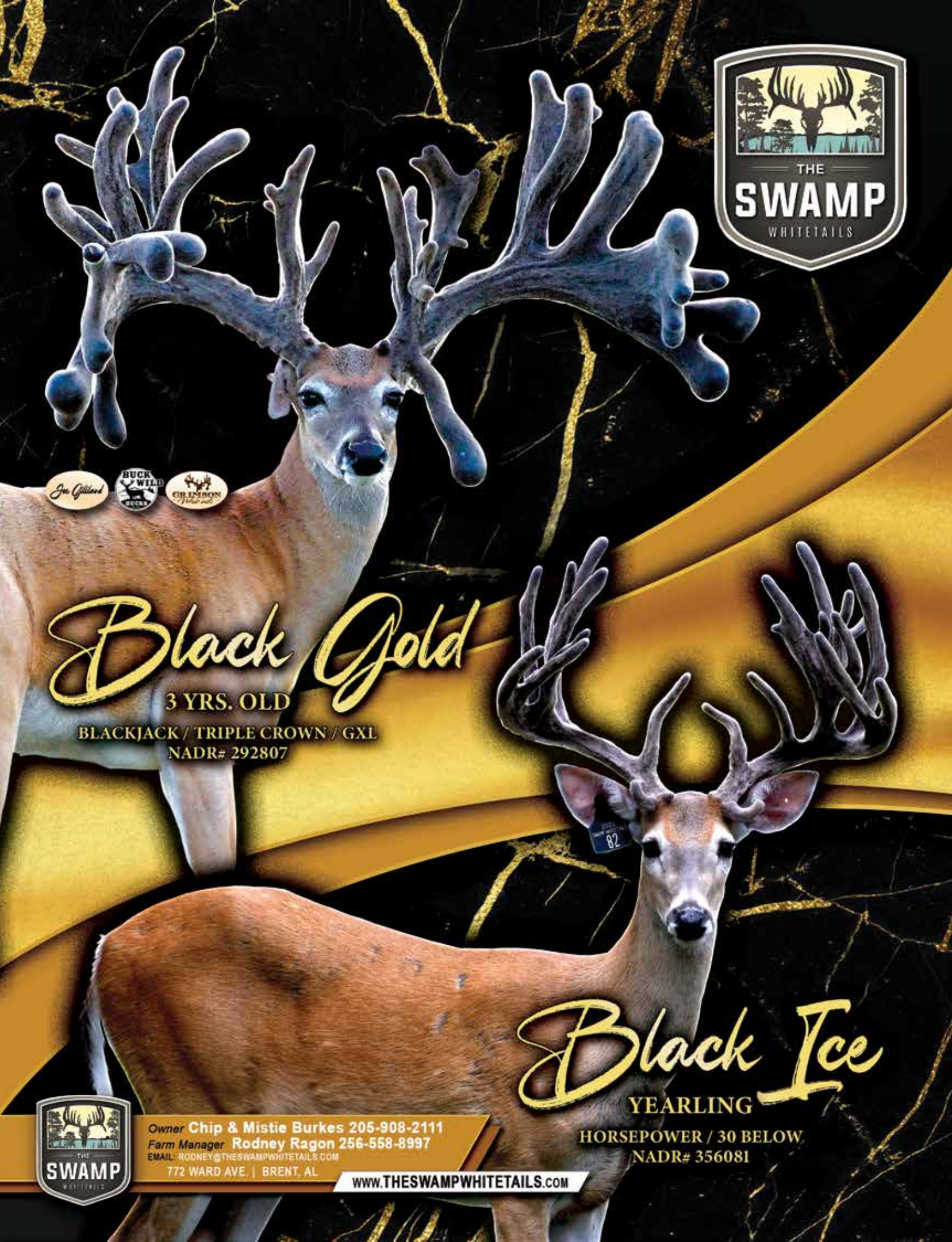
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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



ADA 2022-2023 Board of Directors
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Winter Issue
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The Alabama Deer Association
2 Industrial Rd. | Brent, AL 35034

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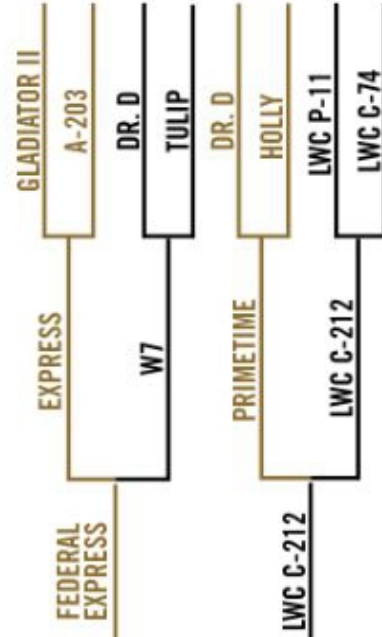
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ANTLERS!

...by Mickey W. Hellickson, Ph.D.

GROWTH PROCESS



ANTLERS...

There is something magical and mystical about deer antlers. Part of their allure is that every antler is different and unique. However, our fascination with deer antlers has its roots in our ancestors, who have hunted antlered game since mans' existence! Our ancestors used antlers for tools and in religious ceremonies. Today, we are still captivated by antlers.

HOW ANTLERS GROW AND WHY THEY ARE SHED each year is a source of wonder and curiosity. Antlers are one of nature's most remarkable accomplishments. Deer, which are capable of regrowing antlers every year, are the only mammals with this capacity to regenerate these complex appendages. The speed at which antlers grow, also makes them the fastest growing structure in the animal kingdom.

Antler growth in bucks begins when they are fawns. However, buck fawns never grow antlers larger than short "buttons", or pedicles, which on rare occasions become hardened. These pedicles then develop into the buck's first spike or branched antlers when he is a yearling (1.5 years old). Antler

size then continues to increase each additional year until peaking at age 6.5.

Deer farmers first discovered that if buck fawns were castrated before pedicle formation, they would never grow antlers. If females are given testosterone, small pedicles develop on their forehead that occasionally further develop into hardened antlers. Scientists have even succeeded in growing antlers on the legs and hips of deer by grafting a portion of the skull bone, where the pedicle forms, to these areas!

Bucks begin growing their antlers in late-winter or early spring, within weeks of when the previous year's antler are shed. Antlers grow very slowly at

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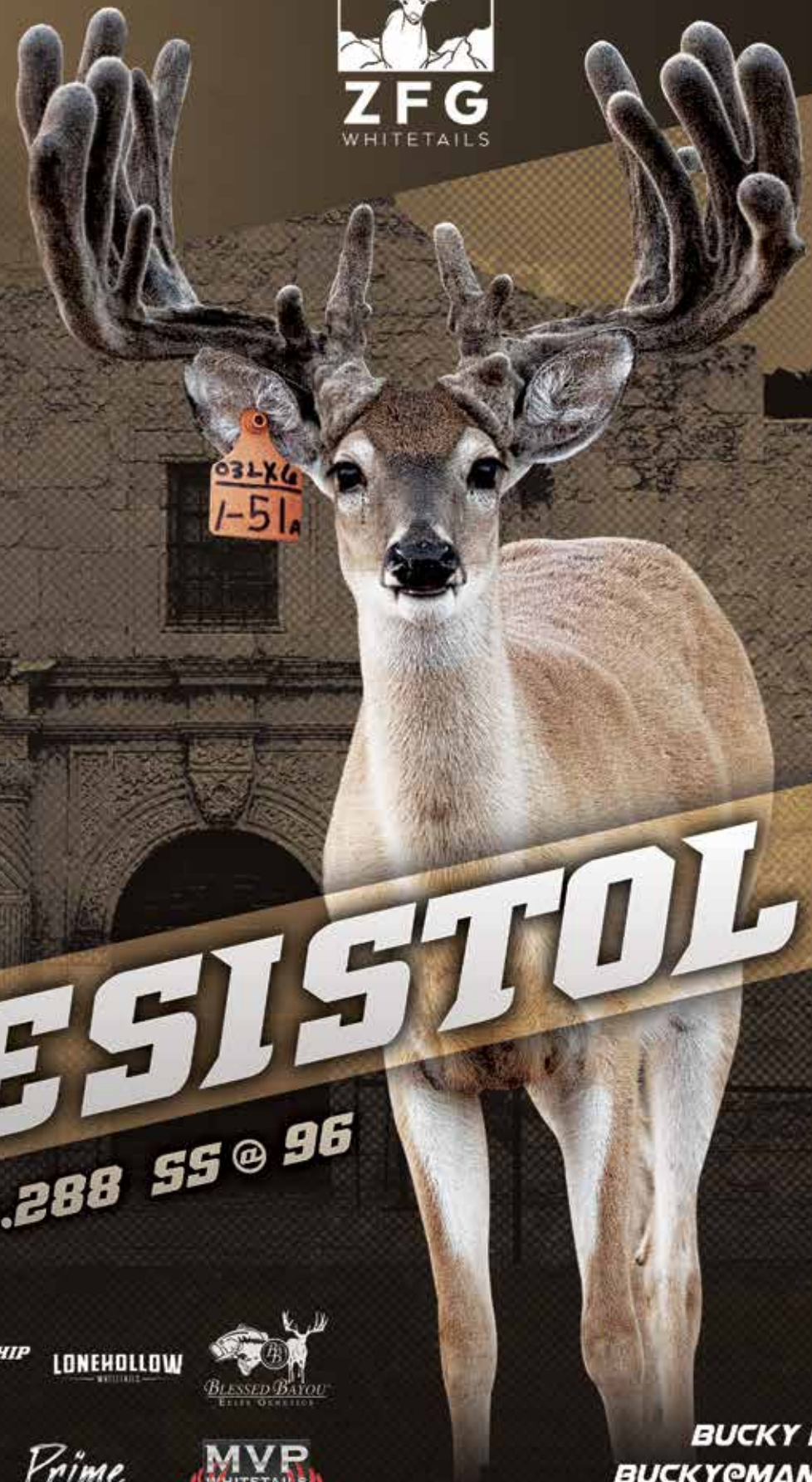
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WHY ARE THERE ANNUAL CYCLES IN ANTLER GROWTH?

Believe it or not, the 23 degree tilt of the earth's axis is the ultimate cause for the annual cycles in deer antlers. If the earth were perpendicular in it's orbit around the sun, there would be no changes in temperature and day length and no need for calendars. This tilt is what causes earth's annually recurring seasons. Deer have adapted their



first, but by late-May, antlers are rapidly growing. Antler growth is usually complete by the end of August. The velvet then hardens and falls off during September. The hardened, polished antlers remain until they are shed during January through March.

velveted antler to harden and the velvet to shed. Unlike antler shedding, velvet shedding usually occurs within a 24-hour period.

The antler cycle lags several months behind the changes in day length because the hormonal changes take time. During fall, decreasing day lengths cause melatonin production to increase, resulting in decreased production of both luteinizing hormone and testosterone. Decreasing testosterone levels then cause the antlers to shed.

physiology and behavior to these seasonal changes, including antler growth.

The environmental cue that regulates antler growth is the amount of day length or photoperiod. The physiological cue is the male hormone testosterone.

The way this works is complicated, but changing day lengths are sensed by the eyes, which send this message, via the optic nerve, to the pineal gland. The pineal gland, a pea-sized organ at the back of the brain, produces many different hormones. One hormone produced is the luteinizing hormone, which controls the amount of testosterone produced in the testes.

The pineal gland also produces a hormone called melatonin, which acts to suppress the production of luteinizing hormone, holding back production of testosterone. Melatonin is produced in higher and higher quantities as the amount of darkness during each day increases. During early summer, as the nights get shorter and day lengths increase, the production of melatonin decreases, allowing the pituitary to produce luteinizing hormone. Increasing amounts of this hormone then result in increased testosterone production, which triggers the



CAN THE CYCLES BE ALTERED?

When the day length cycles are artificially changed, deer grow antlers according to the new cycle. Scientists have shortened day length cycles to six months instead of one year. This doubling of the annual cycle caused deer to grow two separate sets of antlers in the same year! When scientists tripled the annual cycle (one annual cycle completed every three months), bucks grew three sets of antlers in one year, but the antlers only grew to about half of normal size. Scientists have also lengthened day length cycles, causing deer to grow antlers only every other year. These antlers still only grow to normal size, but the length of time bucks are in velvet increases.

In the past, scientists have also relocated deer from one hemisphere to another, such as the transplants of different deer species from North America and Europe (northern hemisphere) to New Zealand (southern hemisphere). These transplanted deer adapt their antler cycles to the opposite day length cycles of the new hemisphere, even though temperatures at the new location decrease as day length increases. Deer that live on the equator, where there are no seasonal fluctuations in day length, are able to breed year-round. However, breeding and antler growth in individual animals still occur on 12-month cycles that depend on the animal's birth date.

WHEN DOES ANTLER SIZE PEAK?

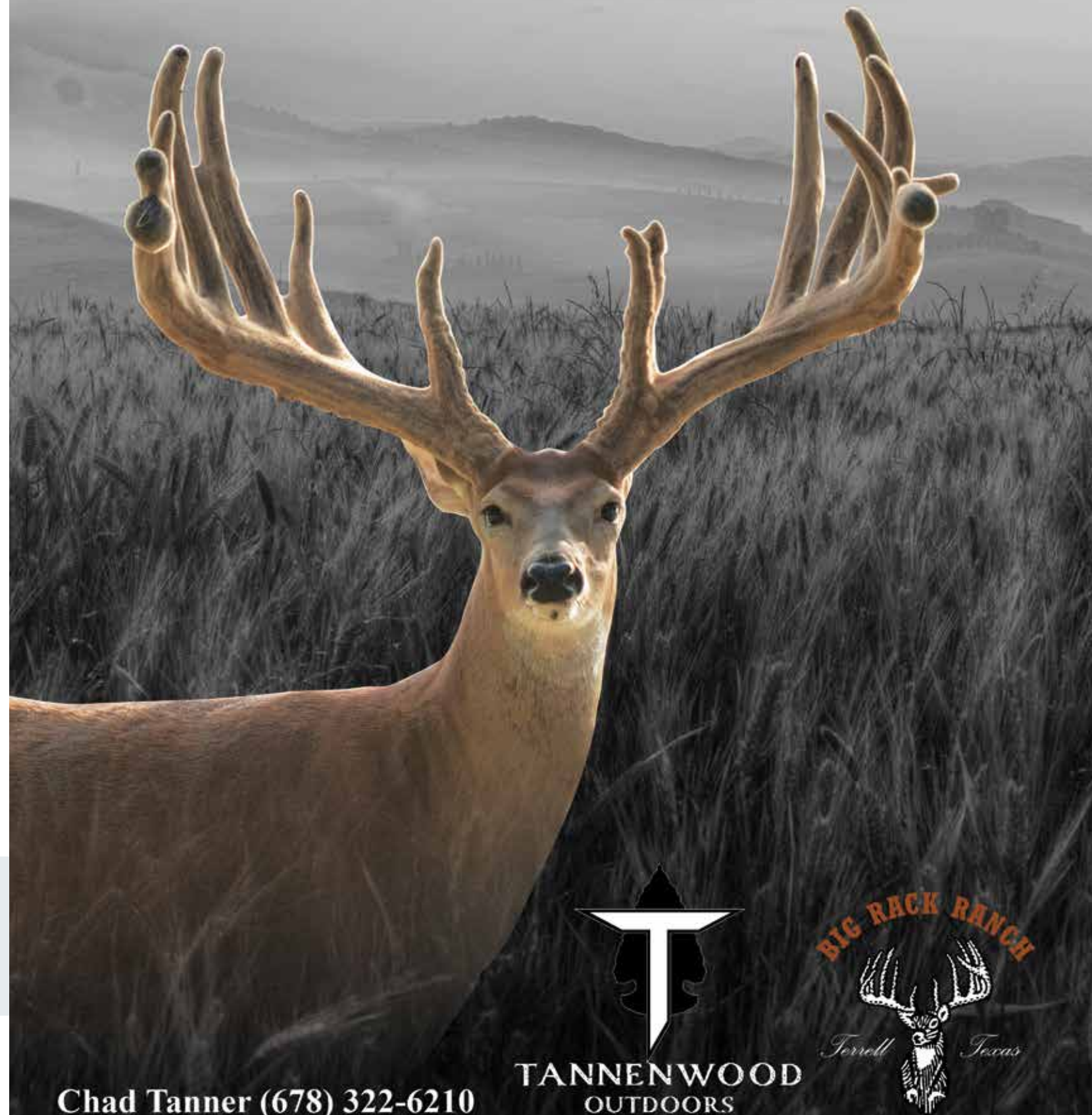
We have very conclusive data when it comes to knowing when antler size peaks for bucks in south Texas. We have now randomly live-captured over 4,000 bucks from the wild of south Texas. We have aged all of these buck by tooth wear and measured all of the racks according to Boone and Crockett Club (BCC) guidelines. On average, antler size and gross BCC score does not reach its maximum until a buck is at least five-and-a-half years old. In fact, many bucks do not peak in antler size until they are six-and-a-half or seven-and-a-half years old. Many of the body characteristics we have measured during past buck captures have also indicated that several body measurements do not peak until these same ages.

Clearly then, if you wish to allow bucks the opportunity to reach their full antler growth potential, they need to be allowed to live until at least five-and-a-half years old. However, many bucks will die of natural causes before reaching full maturity.

Dr. Mickey Hellickson is an internationally recognized expert on white-tailed deer and has given countless public presentations throughout the eastern and central U.S. and northern Mexico. He is a staff writer for the Journal of the Texas Trophy Hunter and past contributor to Quality Whitetails and Deer and Deer Hunting. He is an avid outdoorsman and has hunted big game on three continents.

MARIACHI @ 3

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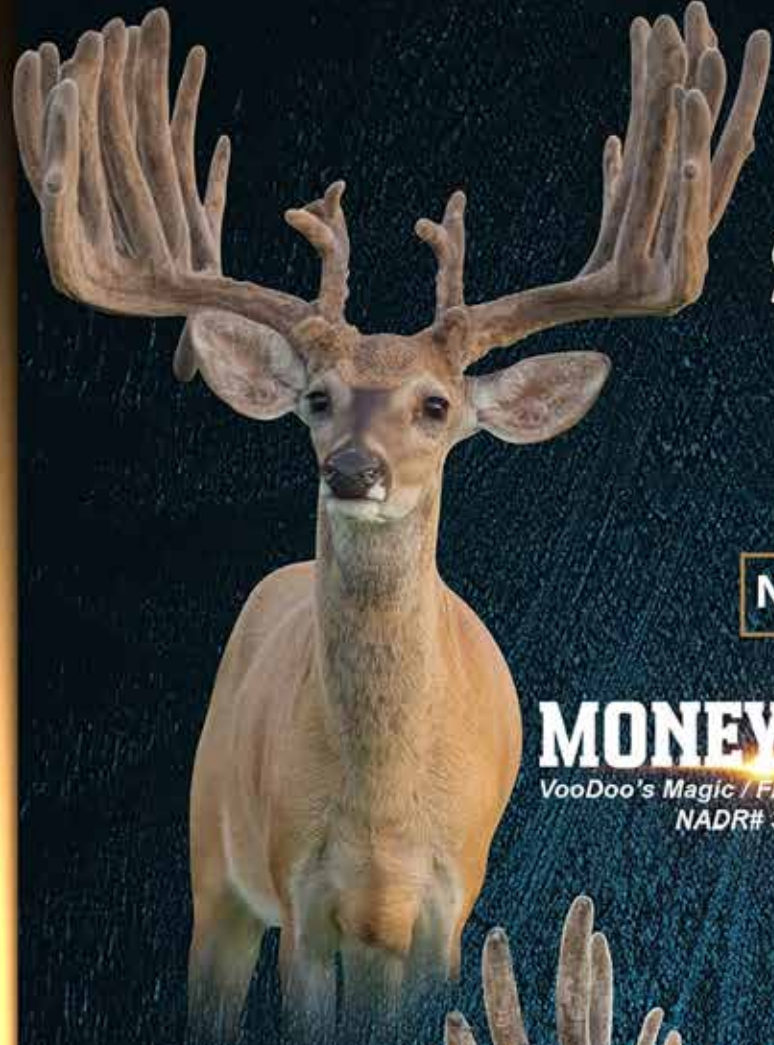


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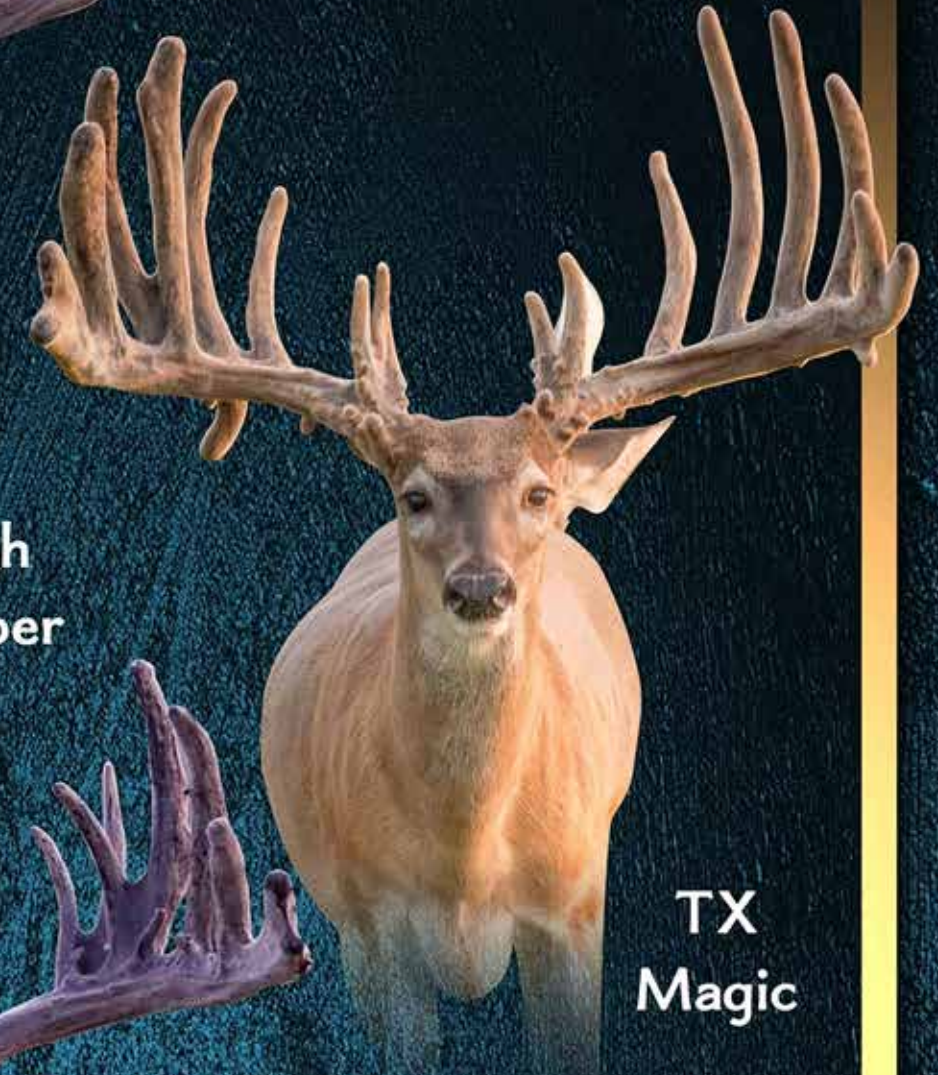
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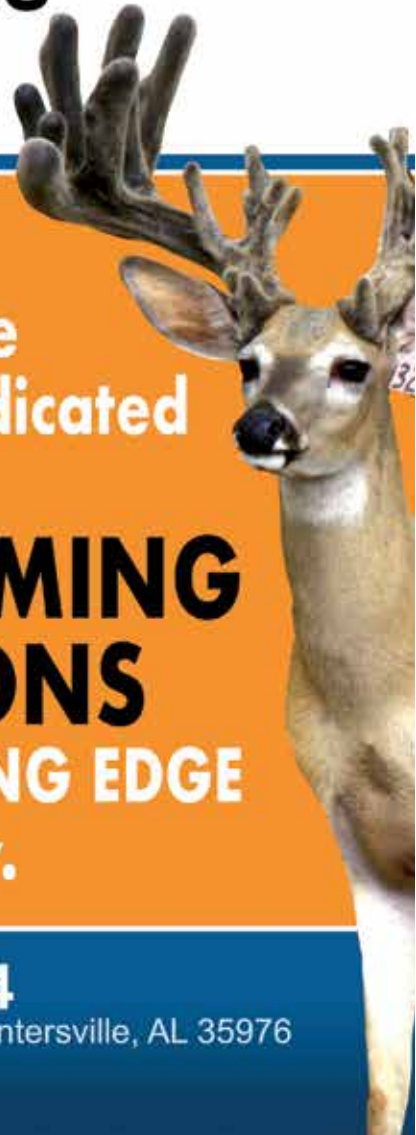
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SEMEN STORAGE & HANDLING

...by Al Diversified, Inc.

GENERAL CARE

There has been many questions asked about semen handling and shipping, general care of a semen tank. I hope to clear up some of your questions today.

There have been many strides made in the semen collection and handling over the years. The most important is the straw, freezing and thawing process has led to improved sperm cell recovery if we can avoid the mistake of mishandling the straws.

We now have a huge increase in direct sales from producer to animal owner and inseminators. Recommendations for handling semen vary among inseminators and handling facilities so I will try to hit the highlights and give a general understanding of the semen tank and straw handling methods. By education, understanding and ending some confusion, the end result may be higher conception rates.

Semen tanks are available with six to eight month liquid nitrogen holding times. The maintenance of very low liquid nitrogen temperatures in the inside chamber is due to the high quality of solid insulation material and vacuum in the outer chamber. Any tank is susceptible to damage from mishandling. Accumulation of frost at the top of the tank indicates a rapid evaporation of liquid nitrogen. When I am

traveling from breeder to breeder and my tank has been jostled by the travel, I notice this from time to time. I check my levels of nitrogen every day and if I find a place to fill up with nitrogen I will stop and top off my tank.

There have been several field studies that have indicated there is no significant damage to semen stored in properly managed farm tanks. However, the State of Washington discovered during a field study liquid nitrogen completely evaporated in 3 of 60 tanks. This may not seem significant unless you are the producer with a significant amount of semen stored in this tank.





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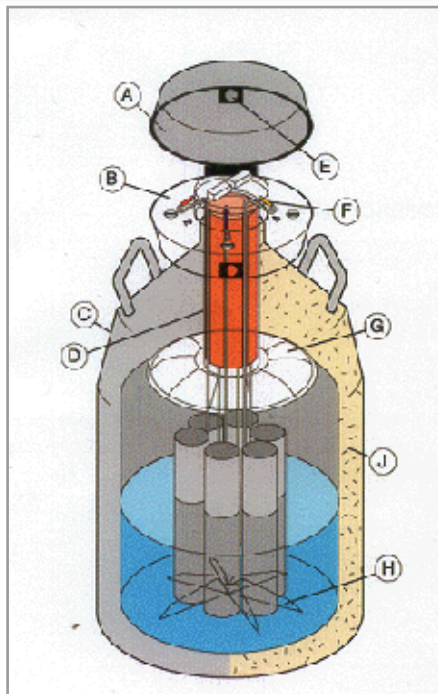
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To help avoid this, follow some simple management practices:

- 1** Avoid excessive movement or abuse of the tank.
- 2** Routinely check nitrogen levels and keep records of levels (dates and depth). You can purchase a handy measuring stick made just for this.
- 3** Store semen tank in area with good light but not in direct sunlight. I also recommend a room that is not too hot, like the barn in summertime. Once a semen tank fails, it goes quickly. Have an alternate plan!
- 4** Always keep tank elevated above concrete floor or other wet surfaces. I find a wood pallet works great. Corrosion of the outer tank will shorten the life and possibly cause failure of the tank!
- 5** Store only the amount of semen needed for six months or one breeding season.



Liquid Nitrogen Semen Tank
 A. Durable, tamper-proof lid design
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 C. Superior strength, lightweight aluminum construction
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In a typical farm semen tank, dangerous temperatures exist in the upper half of the neck tube. See following:

Location in Neck Tube	Range in Temp (F)
Top	+36 to +54
1 inch from top	+5 to -8
2 inches from top	-40 to -51
4 inches from top	-148 to -184
6 inches from top	-292 to -313

Exposure to these differences in temperature can occur when semen is transferred from tank to tank or when handling semen within the neck while trying to locate a particular unit. Once the thermal injury is done to a straw it is permanent and cannot be corrected by returning semen to liquid nitrogen.

Following semen handling practices are recommended to minimize thermal damage.

- 1** Transfer of semen between tanks must be coordinated and rapid. Two people should be involved, and tanks sitting side by side. Try to have tanks filled before transfer. Raise canisters only to a level necessary to locate and appropriate the cane of semen you require.

- 2** Keep a semen inventory system and mount it on the wall or attach it to the tank. Try to cover the inventory and keep it from being destroyed. **I like to see the cane code, bull name and which canister it is stored in along with the number of straws you have in it.** As it is used, change the inventory.

- 3** When pulling a straw of semen for thawing raise the canister into the lower portion of the neck, identify the cane where straw is located. Lower the canister further into the neck to protect other straws from thermal damage. You may need to bend the top tab of the cane to a 45 degree angle to reduce the chance of bending the straw. Use tweezers to transfer straw to bath and quickly lower the cane back into canister and lower into tank.

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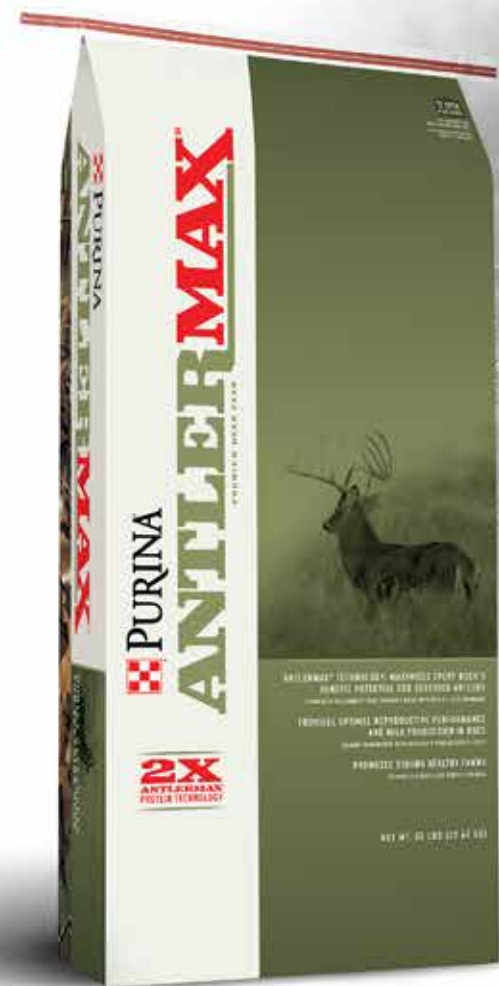
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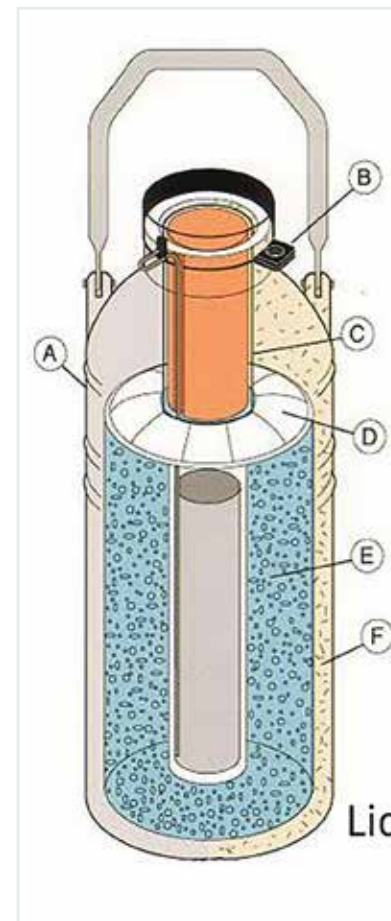
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I strongly recommend if you are purchasing semen from another producer and are transferring semen from their tank to yours you follow these safe practices from beginning to end. Each time a tank is opened, a canister raised and a straw handled the semen has a risk of being compromised. This could very well damage your conception results.

Next is the problem of private producers shipping semen. This is called a dry shipper and is generally sent by UPS. These have a super absorbent material inside. These have to be “charged” with liquid nitrogen and are supposed to be able to hold a -150 F temperature for 14 days. I never plan on 14 days!!! Once again, the same semen transfer rules apply from storage to shipper. But for shipping please make sure you get the tank charged properly and sent in a very timely manner. I have been on a breeder’s farm when we opened the tank and there was NO vapor and it was dry and all semen ruined. When you receive a shipper your best bet is to just leave it in a cool place until your ai time is close. If it will be a few days, open the shipper, check for vapor and if you have a place you can get nitrogen you can go fill it. The semen shipping companies usually send a 3 day call tag. You just follow the directions to close and lock the tank and set it back where UPS can pick it up.

I hope I have helped with some understanding of the semen tank. I highly recommend finding a storage facility if you have large amounts of units to be stored. When

needed you make a call and they ship semen for you and take care of the professional work. They can then transfer semen UNDER liquid nitrogen and reduce the percentage of lost viability. I have used the same facility for 25 years and my loss has been so minimal I recommend this to all of my clients.





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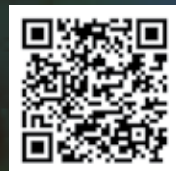
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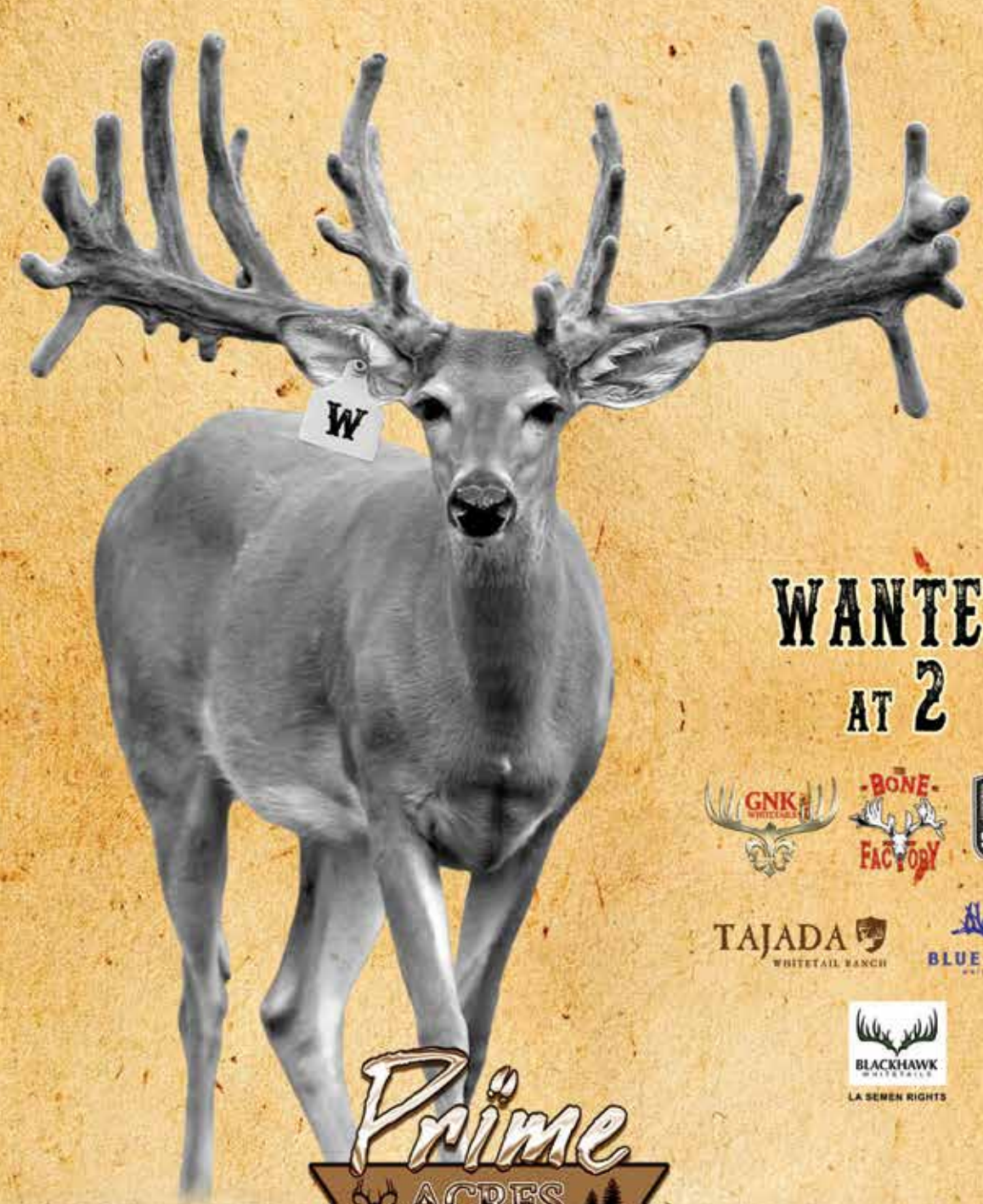
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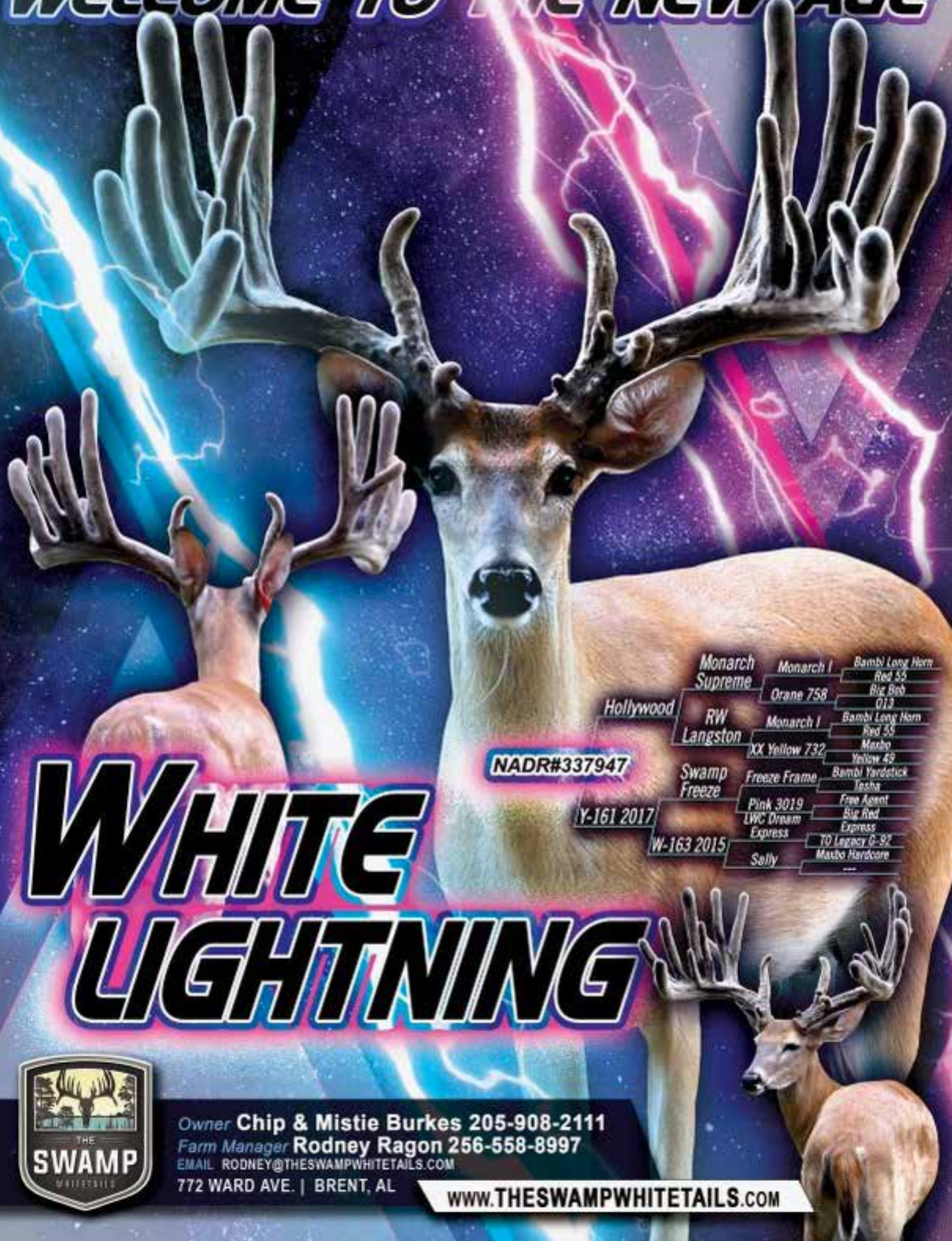
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