



New York Deer and Elk Farmers Association

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Maxbo Stretch @ 4

**NORTH EAST
WHITETAIL**

**FEATURED
FARM STORY**

**NORTH EAST
WHITETAIL –
FULFILLING A
LONG-DESIRED
DREAM**

By: Gail Veley

Hard work and a young man's dream was the reason Portuguese immigrant Mario DaCosta knew he would one day have a deer farm of his own. He arrived in the United States in 1979 as a twenty-something self-starter with a vision to have his own piece of land. One late afternoon, driving through the town of Elizaville in upstate New York, he spotted a sign that read "150 acres for sale." He called the number on the sign and explained in the best English he could speak at that time, that he could make a down payment and get a mortgage for the rest. The seller agreed. An overjoyed Mario realized his dream was about to take shape. Today that dream is called North East Whitetail. Still located on that original parcel of land, the breeding farm and hunting preserve has expanded from the original 150 acres to 250.

Shortly after buying his land, he and his Portuguese wife Odete and their small children began to spend weekends there, as they lived about an hour away in a house in Pelham, New York. "We were having a barbeque and Odete was washing dishes in the creek," Mario, 63, recalled of that day. "She told me she would like to have a little cabin to wash the dishes." Her cabin request was later fulfilled by a mobile home since Mario wasn't sure at that time, how it was all going to work out.

After a few unavoidable learning curves, Mario mastered the secrets to successful deer farming.

However, when he first began "I knew nothing about deer farming," he said. He owned seven deer with no known pedigrees or DNA who "bred themselves." There was nowhere to turn for advice as only one outdoor deer-hunting magazine existed at that time and there were no deer veterinarians. He even asked a wild boar and goat farmer for advice since his animals, like deer, were not your typical farm animals.

Mario then decided he would like more deer on his land and called a gentleman who sold them. The gentleman asked Mario if he could come and visit with him awhile. "He starts telling me everything I do is wrong," Mario explained. "He said I need a breeding program and a working and handling facility and separate pens. I started scratching my head and thinking 'oh my gosh that is a lot of money.'

The man's advice, though, was well-taken. Mario bought bred does from reputable deer farms shortly afterwards. In 2006 Mario and his business partner Pete Valerio, 38, were ready to officially open North East Whitetail. Heeding good advice through the years has led to the successes that North East Whitetail enjoys today. This month's cover deer, Maxbo Stretch, proves those efforts have paid off. At eight years old, Maxbo Stretch, a big typical buck, scored 298 inches with a 30-inch inside

spread. "He was bottle fed and he's very tame," Mario said. "You can pet him." Some of their other quality breeding bucks include Black Moon, Captain Jack, NE Escalade, Yellow 100, Frank and Maxbo 2010.

Although it has taken a lot of hard work to get to the point they are at today, it doesn't feel like work to Mario, who also owns and operates several other successful businesses in the New York and New Jersey area. "I'm a business man and need a place to feel good after dealing with the public. This is like a therapy to me. I've enjoyed creating relationships with people from all different cultures. This makes me feel very happy."

Pete, who coincidentally happens to be Portuguese, agrees. "I grew up loving fishing and nature. When you work outside doing something you love, it doesn't feel like work." He also agrees that North East Whitetail is like paradise away from all the hustle and bustle of city life. He and Mario would never trade this for anything!

