

SWINE MANAGER OF THE YEAR Winner

Schwartz Farms, Inc. is a family-owned business with founding principles of integrity, respect, excellence, innovation and adaptability, and it remains dedicated to advocating a family-oriented atmosphere. The business philosophy of Schwartz Farms is simple – it understands it operates in a commodity environment and, as such, focuses on optimization of animal health and cost of production. Critical to obtaining this objective is continuous improvement.

Schwartz Farms' site manager Brian Oeltjenbruns and his 20-person staff are key to implementing this philosophy at two southwest Minnesota farrowing facilities. Oeltjenbrun's ability to implement swine health and production management strategies, as well as motivate staff, is why he is named the 2010 Minnesota Pork Industry Swine Manager of the Year.

Schwartz Farms, Inc., headquartered in Brown County, nominated Oeltjenbruns for the award.

Brian Hopwood, supervisor of farrowing operations, and Mark Schwartz, manager of production systems, both of Schwartz Farms, recognized Oeltjenbruns for the nomination as a result of his ability to organize, coordinate and delegate duties at the two sites he currently manages, which are comprised of 5,100 sows and two dozen employees.

"The accomplishment of successfully managing two facilities concurrently cannot be taken lightly, particularly when the two units have consistently ranked in the top third within the system in several production categories," Hopwood said.

Oeltjenbruns joined Schwartz Farms in September 2001 as the unit manager for their 2,500-sow, farrow-to-wean facility in Cottonwood County. In 2007, he took on additional responsibilities by managing a second 2,600-sow, farrow-to-wean site in Jackson County.

Oeltjenbruns' responsibilities as unit manager demonstrate his diverse skills and organizational abilities. Among his regular duties are personnel supervision and training, addressing safety and biosecurity, monitoring and implementing tasks to meet production goals, pig scheduling, recordkeeping and mechanical maintenance, as well as meeting budget and cost of production goals.

Oeltjenbruns developed his swine production knowledge over many years. While growing up on an 80-head sow farm, Oeltjenbruns found he enjoyed raising pigs and had a knack for pork production.



Minnesota Pork Industry 2010 Swine Manager of the Year, Brian Oeltjenbruns of Schwartz Farms with crew members: (front row) James Zuehlke, Lynette Oeltjenbruns, Chad McKinney, Janice Tomschin, (back row) Daniel Speikers, Joshua Oakland, Melvin Lewis.

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Brian Hopwood, Schwartz Farms farrowing operation supervisor, and John Schwartz, owner of Schwartz Farms, say the qualities making Brian Oeltjenbruns an excellent site manager is his pork production knowledge, successful coordination and delegation of duties, and an ability to motivate personnel.

His formal education includes an associate degree in accounting from Iowa Lakes Community College, an associate degree in swine production from the University of Minnesota, Waseca and bachelor degrees in animal science and plant science from the University of Minnesota.

He transferred the information he gained in the classroom by facing real-life production challenges found inside the barn while working at the U of M swine research facility and for an area pork producer. His experience working closely with swine veterinarians and swine practitioners at the U of M also provided many opportunities to hone his stockmanship skills.

Examples of Oeltjenbruns' production contributions include implementing strategies to increase wean age by expanding farrowing capacity and increase sow productivity by installing self-feeders for lactating sows.

Oeltjenbruns' management philosophy is founded on teamwork. He encourages his team to put themselves in each other's shoes and, upon inquiry, offers a modest summary of his leadership principles: "Listen, listen, listen; treat team members equally; and ask of someone only what you would ask of yourself," Oeltjenbruns said.

Mark Schwartz elaborates, "Brian is able to effectively define and communicate clear expectations to his crew, resulting in an empowered staff and, in turn, highly-organized and concerted production."

Oeltjenbruns, his wife, Lynette, and their children, Dylan, Daniel and Caitlin, live in Mountain Lake. His community activities include supporting the local FFA chapter, coaching the Mountain Lake High School track and field team and ushering at Trinity Lutheran Church. He enjoys golf, outdoor activities and working alongside his family as they venture into raising beef cattle.

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