



Southern Waste Handling:

Managing Nutrients with Precision and Efficiency

When the days get longer in the spring and shorter in the fall, the crew at Southern Waste Handling Corporation (SWH), knows it will be all hands on deck for “pumping season.”

SWH contracts with Iowa Select Farms to apply manure from 15 farms within just a few miles of their base north of Mount Ayr, Iowa. The business was started in 1998 by Garry Bjustrom, who owned manure-handling equipment to service his own hog buildings. As Iowa Select Farms began to grow in Ringgold and Union Counties, they worked with Bjustrom to contract his services.

Tragically, Bjustrom passed away suddenly in 2013 at age 53. But the business continues to thrive, thanks to his son, Brandon; wife, Marci; and longtime friend and business manager, Ron Swanson. The father-son duo of Travis and Austin Tull round out the full-time SWH crew, which is assisted in the spring and fall by at least two additional, part-time workers.

Specialized equipment does the job

SWH uses a drag-hose system to transfer manure from the barns to surrounding farm ground. “It works well for the terrain in this area,” noted Swanson. “With lots of rolling ground, terraces and relatively large fields, the horses are easier to maneuver and compact the soil less than tankers.”

Manure is pumped directly from the pits to the transfer hoses, then distributed via an Aerway applicator. Spreading rates are gauged in gallons per minute and adjusted according to precise rates for each field that are established in advance by Iowa Select Farms environmental managers. For more distant application sites, transfer pumps are placed every mile, enabling distribution up to three miles from a building.

The Aerway applicator injects manure directly into the soil, minimizing run-off and odor. It’s a process Swanson compares to fertilizing a golf course, “only bigger.” By angling the harrow on the unit, a minimal amount of tillage can be executed at the same time. “It’s a perfect system for people who no-till, and it also works well on pasture ground,” said Swanson.

The process is the same regardless of what type of Iowa Select Farms barns they are servicing, which may be a sow, nursery, gilt development unit or finishing farm.

SWH maintains a fleet of two self-priming pumps, six agitators, three Aerway systems, five transfer pumps, nine tractors, and several “hose carts” that roll, unroll and transport the hoses. “When we get into the busy season, we have two crews running full-time. Back-up equipment is on deck and ready to go, so we aren’t stopped by a break-down,” said Brandon. “Every day matters when conditions are right for applying.”

When they aren’t in the active pumping season, the SWH crew spends countless hours in the shop, where they build, update and maintain equipment. Their main pumps were retrofitted from pre-emission semi engines, and they have built most of their hose carts themselves by upgrading the design of a purchased unit. The equipment is sandblasted and repainted on a rotating schedule, and this year they refitted one application tractor with extra-wide tires, which they hope will enable them to reduce compaction and run on wetter ground.



PROFILE

Southern Waste Handling Corporation

MT. AYR, IOWA

Employees: Five full-time, two part-time



Southern Waste Handling pumps and applies manure from 15 Iowa Select farms in southwest Iowa, and also moves snow at multiple farms.



Growth through adversity

Their state-of-the-art shop is a year-round beehive of activity and it was earned the hard way. In June 2010, a tornado hit the property, damaging or destroying virtually every building in its path. It took Garry Bjuström out of the cattle business because a large calving barn was destroyed. He decided to channel his resources toward rebuilding the shop, which was completed a year after his death.

"My dad always had a lot of irons in the fire," said Brandon. "At his busiest, he farmed 3,500-4,000 acres of row crops, fed 4,000 head of hogs, and calved 400 head of cows in the spring and fall, in addition to the manure pumping business."

Marci Bjuström said her husband would be proud to see Southern Waste Handling running in full stride today, and he would be equally pleased by the positive impact Iowa Select Farms has had on the region. "Garry grew up in northern Iowa near Algona, but he farmed down here for more than 30 years, and he loved this area," she shared.

"MANY LOCAL FAMILIES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN RURAL LIFESTYLES THANKS TO EMPLOYMENT AND CONTRACTS WITH IOWA SELECT FARMS."

– Marci Bjuström



She said many local farmers have been able to maintain their rural lifestyles thanks to employment and contract work with Iowa Select Farms, plus they benefit from the nearby demand for the grain they produce. "It's been a win-win for Iowa Select Farms and our local communities," she said.

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Mount Ayr, Iowa

Iowa Select Farms

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