

Livestock Raising IS SECOND NATURE

PROFILE

The Schrage Family

PARKERSBURG, IOWA



Employees: 3

Iowa Select Farms contracts with Craig and Nancy Schrage and their son, Landon, to manage nine finisher farms in Butler County. Craig also is a caretaker trainer in the production well-being team for Iowa Select Farms.



When Nancy Schrage married a dairy farmer, the self-described “city girl” said her parents were a little worried for her. “I think they were afraid I didn’t realize what I’d signed up for,” she laughed.

But Nancy and her husband, Craig, contentedly settled into dairy farming and raising a family near their home community of Parkersburg, Iowa. It was a lifestyle they would maintain for 20 years, laboring together and instilling work ethic in their four children—Cami, Landon, Taylor and Kali.

Then in 1997, their “Iowa Select Farms” chapter began.

Craig’s father, Harold, sold land to Iowa Select Farms for one of the company’s first finisher farms in Butler County. Craig and Nancy were offered the option to manage it, and their livestock-raising careers took a semi-dramatic turn from there.

“THERE IS A UNIQUE SATISFACTION IN USING MY MATERNAL INSTINCTS TO RAISE YOUNG ANIMALS AND KEEP THEM HEALTHY AND THRIVING.”

– Nancy Schrage

“We quickly learned that in some ways, managing pigs was very similar to dairy farming,” shared Craig. “We already were used to daily chores and the 365-days-a-year devotion it takes to raise animals. But we enjoyed being free of the other tasks—the manure hauling, hay and silage making, maternity monitoring and more—that dairy farming required.”

Soon more buildings became available to manage, and the Schrages made the whole-grade shift from dairy farmers to pig farmers. Like their first venture, they’ve now been at it for just over 20 years.

In that time, the Schrages have managed up to 12 finisher farms and employed two hired men. Recognizing his outstanding skills overseeing both pigs and people, Iowa Select Farms hired Craig as a full-time employee. He spent five years working as a finishing supervisor, and then moved into a caretaker training roll for the company’s production well-being team.

“I’ve heard the saying that the best leaders are the ones with the dirtiest coveralls,” said Craig. “We’ve been doing this a long time, and I enjoy sharing what I’ve learned with others. It has been tremendously rewarding to work with so many motivated and industrious people.”

The Schrages’ oldest son, Landon, returned to the family business in 2006 after graduating with a degree in agricultural business from Iowa State University. He now manages five finisher farms, and handles vaccinations for the four finisher farms his mother manages. “The oldest of my three kids is 10, so we’re just starting to get busy with activities,” he said.



"I usually can work my schedule accordingly, and we know when we'll have quieter weeks to take a quick vacation. The hours are long, but they're also flexible."

As lifelong Parkersburg residents, Craig and Nancy said Iowa Select Farms has transformed the region. "It's opened many doors for entrepreneurial opportunities for virtually anyone who wants to work," said Craig. "Grain farmers, feed suppliers, manure haulers, truckers, load-out crews, and power-washing crews all have benefitted from the jobs and business growth created by Iowa Select Farms' presence."

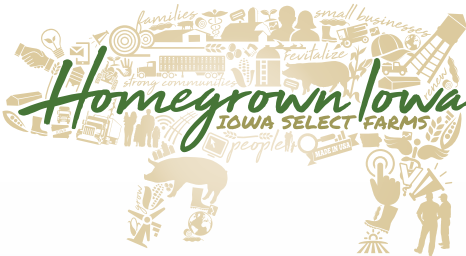
Community pride runs deep in Parkersburg, which recovered from a devastating tornado in 2008, and the tragic loss of legendary high-school football coach, Ed Thomas, just two years later. Both Craig and Landon were coached by Thomas, who was also a close family friend. "This area is known for its good people, and I think that's one of the reasons Iowa Select Farms has been so successful here," said Craig.



The family values the Deb and Jeff Hansen Foundation's philanthropic generosity, including donating pork to local food pantries, and annual pork loin giveaways in communities throughout the state. For many years, the Schrages also have enjoyed company-sponsored events for families at Adventureland Park and the Iowa State Fair.

"Growing up, those were the fun days," quipped Landon. He remembers many long days, too -- including his older sister, Cami, helping load out market hogs in the wee hours of the morning to earn extra cash to pay for her high-school prom dress. "The truck drivers gave her a hard time, but she wanted that dress, and she knew she had to work to earn it."

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Parkersburg, Iowa

Iowa Select Farms

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