

MIKE KRAUSE: PROFESSIONAL FARM MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Mentor, personable, kind-hearted, dedicated, helpful, reliable. That's how those who know him best describe Mike Krause, who grew up on his family's farm, ranch and feedlot in western Nebraska and now works for Hertz Farm Management, Inc. overseeing operations in Nebraska and western Iowa.

"Mike is a tremendous asset for our company. In addition to his responsibilities as a professional farm manager, he also manages our Omaha office and serves as regional manager for our company," said Loyd Brown, president of Hertz Farm Management. "Despite his many responsibilities, he always provides excellent support for his clients, taking a proactive approach in making recommendations that will improve the farms he manages and improve net income for his clients."

Improving net income for clients is one area in which Krause has proven himself during his 12 years at Hertz Farm Management. Several years ago, he encouraged a client to install a drainage system that she has since named the "trillion-dollar ditch."

"Mike proposed this to us after he had done his

homework, prepared cost figures and projections. We as a group okayed the deal, and it has been very profitable ever since," said Julie Schroeder, a client in Waterloo, Neb. "We were a little dubious at first, but now we always ask, 'How's the trillion-dollar ditch working?' and it's working fine."

Fine is just an understatement. According to the operator who farms the ground, the ditch has turned what used to be an 80-acre lake into an 80-acre field of productive farm land.

"Since we dug that ditch, we haven't lost a single crop, and that's truly amazing," said Richard Erickson, farm operator in Lyons, Neb.

WORKING CLOSELY WITH CLIENTS

Saving his clients' money and making his clients' money often go hand-in-hand, even if his methods are sometimes a bit unconventional.

On one client's farm near Omaha, Neb., Krause made plans with the Omaha Sewage Plant to arrange for delivery of sludge, a waste treatment by-product that helps improve organic matter and soil tilth, plus saves



Mike Krause accepts his award while (from left to right) Brent Rockers, Syngenta marketing manager, Rick Patton, *AgProfessional* publisher, and Dick Edmunds, 2009-2010 ASFMRA president, observe.

money on commercial fertilizer.

“When he first told me about his idea, I got pretty excited. I had read about some of the sludge work in Illinois and other places,” said Roy Towl, client, Omaha, Neb. “Since we’ve been using sludge, the available soil nutrients have really improved in a high pH environment, and it has tremendously cut down the high cost of fertilizer.”

Whether it’s through the use of sludge or investing in variable rate technology, Krause believes input efficiency is critical to achieving the highest net returns for his clients.

“The technology we have incorporated on this farm, with Mike’s encouragement, has allowed us to use our fertilizer better, put it where it’s needed and also put our seed right where it’s needed, population wise,” said Scott Doht, farm operator, Lyons, Neb. “We have maximized our yields that way, which is all showing up in the end on our yield monitor.”

DEDICATION AND LOYALTY

Not only does Krause look at the results from each season to analyze what will help improve his clients’ farms the following season, he’s also right there helping them make decisions when in-season opportunities, or potential setbacks, come their way.

“This year our area experienced excessive flooding and a few hailstorms. During that time, Mike was in our office, working side by side with our agronomists to determine the best solution for his clients’ crops,” said Matt Johnson, southeast agronomy territory manager for Central Valley Ag in Oakland, Neb. “He does a very nice job staying on top of the ground he represents.”

Krause’s service mentality isn’t reserved for his clients alone. He is always there to lend a helping hand to his colleagues and family, as well.

“Most of what I’ve learned in the farm management field has come from Mike. He’s a great leader and a great wealth of information, not only on the agronomic aspects of managing farms, but also the personal relationships that a person has to develop with our clients and farm operators,” said Krause’s colleague, Stan Lierz, professional farm manager for Hertz Farm Management.

Krause’s daughters, Megan and Monica, describe their dad as an honest, hardworking and loving father who



Lloyd Brown and Mike Krause discuss Mike's 2011 plans for his clients' farms.

incorporates these qualities into his work. “His dedication and loyalty to us, as well as his clients, makes him a very good father and farm manager,” said Monica Krause.

Krause’s wife, Susie, also feels the characteristics that make him an excellent husband, father and friend are the same qualities that make him an excellent farm manager. “Mike has the unique ability of being able to really focus on things that matter. He goes above and beyond for both his family and his clients,” said Susie Krause.

WINNERS CIRCLE

Krause’s dedication to his clients, colleagues, friends and family, as well as his innovative approach and stewardship of the land he manages led to his selection as 2010 Professional Farm Manager of the Year, the professional farm management industry’s highest honor.

“Mike Krause exemplifies the spirit of the Professional Farm Manager of the Year award,” said Brent Rockers, marketing manager, Syngenta Crop Protection. “We are proud to welcome him to the ranks of outstanding award winners who have set a high standard for all in the agricultural industry to follow.”

Krause, who received the award in front of his peers at the recent American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers (ASFMRA) annual convention held Nov. 1-3 in Orlando, Fla., expressed his gratitude to Syngenta, and award co-sponsors, *AgProfessional* magazine and ASFMRA.

“When I look at the people who have won this award in the past, and believe that I am even considered to be in this circle, it’s such a rewarding accomplishment for me,” said Krause. “I applaud Syngenta, and co-sponsors, for recognizing the value of professional farm managers in the agricultural industry through this award.”

To watch the award video honoring Mike Krause, visit www.farmassist.com. **AG**

Mary Cameron is employed by Gibbs & Soell, and she coordinates the Professional Farm Manager of the Year Program for Syngenta.



Farm operator Richard Erickson and his grandson, Hunter, show Mike how well the 'trillion-dollar ditch' has benefitted his client's farm.