

Ian's leadership extends beyond his involvement in exhibiting swine. Ian has been an active student since arriving at Iowa State University. His involvement on campus includes being a member of the Iowa State Dairy Science Club as well as the Iowa State Block and Bridle club where he is a member of the Swine Interest group. This past year, Ian received high scholastic achievements by being recognized on the ISU Dean's List.

Ian grew up raising swine on his family's farm. They specialized in show pigs, primarily raising Berkshire swine. Ian has been active in the family's operation and takes pride in exhibiting their home-raised livestock on the local, state, and national levels.

Ian is attending Iowa State University pursuing a degree in Animal Science. Following graduation, he intends to continue to graduate school, to earn a degree in Veterinary Medicine. Ian would like to work in private practice as a large animal veterinarian. ◦

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Case Custom Meats

photos by **Beth Wood and/or Teresa Milner, Dirt Road Wife Photography**

Case Custom Meats (CCM) is located in Yoder, Wyo. Paul and his family have 240 acres, 160 of which is farm ground, the rest is pasture, that they graze our cattle on, 1 mile north and 2 miles west of Hawk Springs, WY. Paul purchased it in 2011 using the USDA beginning farmer program. They had a tough first couple of years, only producing crops for income. Between low commodity prices and hail storms, the Case Family had to find another way to cash flow. That was when they started purchasing livestock to feed their crops to and began to sell pork, beef, lamb, and chicken as their main income stream.

A little bit about yourself and your family.

Paul Case, age 34, when not working on Case Custom Meats endeavors, he works with his dad, Mike, at Castle Stone Granite.

Beth Wood, age 32, works for the University of Wyoming Extension as a Cent\$ible Nutrition Educator in Goshen and Niobrara counties, as a "9-3" job, but is helping with the farm, running kiddos around and CCM otherwise.

Paul and Beth met years ago (circa 2002ish) via FFA and showing livestock. Life happened and both did their own thing for almost 13 years. Then, via social media, and yet again, FFA, they reconnected and have been together for almost four years, and recently got engaged and our planning a wedding in 2021.

Gracie Case, age 9, loves soccer and tumbling, as well as, making sure the animals on the farm are her best friend J She is in her 2nd year of 4-H and has taken a liking to show pigs – she said after county fair that showmanship was her favorite!

Eli Case, age 7, loves dirt, soccer, and driving the side-by-side, as well as, keeping dad in check.

Who in your family is involved with your business?

Beth: All of us. The work of the farm and Case Custom Meats wouldn't get done without each one of us doing our part. Those parts are always changing and moving as we grow, and the kids grow. We are also thankful for the additional help, from time to time, from both



sets of parents, and my brother, Billy. It is nice to have their opinions and to vent to someone else, who may have a different perspective. But their extra hands are much appreciated when we need it. No farm operation can be run without many hands.

When and how did you start farming or ranching and producing products?

Beth: This question is a little two-fold. Both Paul and I were in 4-H and FFA growing up. Paul primarily raised market animals on his parents' place, for the county fair. His great grandparents owned farms and his grandpa Don and his dad butchered meat for some time. I, on the other hand, am a fifth-generation farmer. Both my parents grew up farming. Then I have continued to do so since I was in 4-H and FFA. In FFA, farming and raising productive livestock were part of my SAE and helped me earn my State and American FFA degrees. I was also fortunate to be a WY FFA State Officer. So you could say, Paul and I both started producing products when we were kids. However, Case Custom Meats specifically started in 2017.

How long have you been raising pigs? How did you get started?

We have been raising pigs since 2011 and started with a small herd of 9 crossbred sows. We used Berkshire boars and started selling to friends and family. Paul worked at the Fort Hays Hog Farm in 2009 and really enjoyed being able to work through multiple breeding's a year on one sow to see what worked best. Having a mostly cattle background at that time, it was great to see how a sow's progeny would develop in under a year from breeding to slaughter.

Why did you choose to do Berkshires?

We chose Berkshires because of their meat quality. Our business is built on providing the best locally raised meat available and Berkshires fit that mold perfectly. Once we get someone to try Berkshire, they are hooked immediately. The quality is like none other and the flavor of the meat is fantastic.

I love seeing your posts on social media! What work goes into them? What advice do you have for those wanting to start promoting their meat more?

We try to post on social media at least 5-6 times per week. Mostly to keep our followers updated on what's going on at the farm. Our goal is to keep everyone engaged, whether it's with a funny meme or pictures of work going on at the farm. Case Custom Meats is 100% a family-run farm to table business, and we try to portray that on social media. Our biggest tip for producers wanting to promote meat more tells a story through your posts of how the meat gets to their table. Posting about sales or products constantly turns potential customers off. Keep your business at the front of their mind and when they are ready to buy, they will come to you first. Additionally, we don't get political, we educate along the way, and we have fun. We don't just post "fluffy" pieces because that's not an accurate description of life – we want everyone to connect with us – through the good, funny, messy, bad, and realness that we are!

What is the biggest concern you see in the industry currently?

Paul: Pork is kind of a hard sell. Lots of our current customers did not like pork before they tried Berkshire. We have had numerous stories of dry tasteless pork that people have bought from the store. That poor experience makes it harder to sell an exceptional product like Berkshire at a premium price. Another

concern at the forefront of any high-end retailer is in an economic downturn. Lower incomes for our customers could result in less frequent purchases.

What advice do you have for someone who wants to get started in Berkshires?

Paul: We would recommend building a herd around excellent maternal traits without sacrificing meat quality. Additionally, don't be afraid to ask questions. There will be failures and setbacks – that's life. But, reaching out to other producers and asking questions, or reading accurate information, can help make one become more successful.

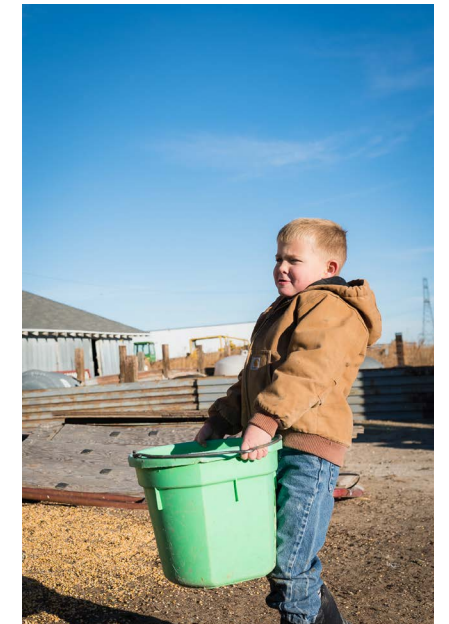
Is there anything you are most proud of accomplishing with your business? Have there been any challenges you have had to overcome? What are you looking forward to in the future?

Paul: On the direct to the consumer side of the business, we are extremely proud every time we have a new customer call that is excited about buying a product because they tried some of our product at a friend's house and say it is 'the best they have ever tasted.' That's a rewarding feeling for both Beth and I. On the wholesale side of the business, we are excited to be entering our third year of sending pork to the restaurants in Yellowstone National Park.

Paul and Beth: The challenges we have had to overcome is acceptance into the local farmer's markets, logistics of supplying Yellowstone, and farming during the busy summer months. Along with me (Beth) working in town, and raising kids. We are a busy family and aside from CCM, our children are our first priority. In the immediate future, we are looking forward to expanding into more households and businesses. We are looking forward in the long term to Eli and Gracie playing a bigger role in the business and having built the foundation for them to take it into the future.

Beth: We encourage anyone to like us Facebook, follow us on Instagram, and also check out our website, www.casecustommeatswy.com We are also available via phone. ◦

Read the full Q&A with Case Custom Meat on americanberkshire.com



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PAUL, BETH, GRACIE AND ELI CASE
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