

Not your average hog farm

By DARRELL BOONE

IF the name "Whiteshire Hamroc" sounds like it might be hog-related, yet somehow unconventional, you get the picture. At the Albion-based swine genetics company, it's anything but hog business as usual.

The company's current enterprises include breeding stock and genetics, swine exports, the sale of hog tissues for human and veterinary medical applications, swine building construction technology, a trucking division, part ownership in a slaughter plant, and a swine genetics software company. Whiteshire Hamroc is developing its own line of branded pork products. The business also raises commercial hogs and grows most of its own crops.

The various, highly integrated and complimentary pieces of the business all have one thing in common.

"Everything we do revolves around pigs," says Mike Lemmon, chief executive officer. A licensed vet, Mike joined the family hog business in 1977.

"I decided I really didn't want to work on horses and cows anymore," he recalls. "My heart was really with pigs, and I wanted to return home and

Key Points

- Successful international business is built around hogs.
- Mike Lemmon and associates seek new ways to add value.
- Human medical applications is a growing market.

raise pigs with my brother, Charlie, and my dad, Ben. But I wanted to use what I'd learned in school and add value to the commodity hog market."

The Lemmons started a new hog farm in 1987 with a primary SPF herd, the offspring of which are the foundation for their breeding stock business today. Over the next 20 years, Mike and Charlie grew the business in various directions by a combination of seeking out creative, forward-thinking ideas; value-added opportunities; good relationships; strategic partnerships; and talented managers and employees.

"As a teenager, I started out baby-sitting Lemmons' kids," says Rebecca Schroeder, current general manager. "After I did OK with their kids, they decided they could trust me with the pigs," she laughs.

"When I earned my degree in animal science, it gave me the opportunity to return home, work for an up-and-coming international company and do

something I really care about."

One of Whiteshire Hamroc's more unique ventures is using swine tissues for human medical applications. "The possibilities are endless," Mike says. Regenerative medicine started in the 1950s, but never built up much steam until the late 1990s.

Hog tissue heals humans

Schroeder explains that tissues can be used from pig organs — bladders, kidneys, intestines — that contain a submucosa lining. The organs are harvested during the regular slaughter process. When introduced into injured human tissues, like ulcers, diabetes-related skin breakdowns or ligament replacements for knee surgeries, undifferentiated cells from hog tissue form naturally occurring biological "scaffolds" that attract the patient's own stem cells.

"The results are amazing," Mike says. "Early research on applications such as use of pig tissue to repair spinal cord damage in other species has been extremely encouraging. We don't know exactly how this works, but in a short period of time, the introduced swine tissue becomes literally indistinguishable from the patient's original tissue."

Whiteshire Hamroc provides swine tissue to a division of DePuy Orthopedics in Warsaw. It's a medical regeneration company, and is the exclusive provider for Tissue Source, a tissue broker. Mike states that the tissue business has been good for his company, but not without hurdles.

"Slaughter plants aren't typically excited about doing anything different in their assembly line, including harvesting the needed organs," he explains. "And the medical profession itself has been skeptical. This is nontraditional, animal-de-



KEY PLAYERS: Mike Lemmon and his son, Ben, make things tick on a daily basis at Whiteshire Hamroc.

velop and harder to track than inserting plastic or titanium. Then there are research trials, involving thousands of hogs over a number of years."

Yet Mike is optimistic. "The medical applications have developed into a couple of opportunities that have worked out very well for us," he says. "The rest will come in time."

One of Whiteshire Hamroc's future dreams is to build a unit specifically to raise pigs for human organ transplants. "This way we could inject your genes into the embryos so that you won't reject the organ," Mike says. "And you could see the pig that's going to provide your liver."

Exports spell opportunity

Mike was on a USDA-sponsored trip to South Korea in 1985. When producers lamented their ability to access some of the better U.S. breeding stock because of health issues, a lightbulb went on for Mike.

"Sometimes it's better to be lucky than smart," he says. "I saw an opportunity to get into exports down the road. But it's also an example of how networking and being in the right place at the right time can pay off."

The U.S. pork industry has pushed lean pretty hard, Mike says. "In Japan and Korea, they told us frankly that some American pork tastes like cardboard, and what they're looking for is an eating experience," he recalls. "From those conversations, we came home and did some research on pH and intramuscular fat, and placed more emphasis on using Duroc terminal boars because of their meat-quality aspects."

Over the years, Whiteshire Hamroc has developed a successful breeding stock export business, mostly to the Far East and South America, through Clayton Agri-Marketing of Missouri.

"It takes a lot of time to de-

velop the relationships and trust necessary to be successful in exports," Mike notes. "Then there are international trade issues. Last year we only exported 1,000 breeding animals because the U.S. was renegotiating all its trade treaties. This year we hope to export about 3,000."

Boone writes from Wabash.

■ To learn more about the company, visit www.whiteshirehamroc.com.

Volume 182 ■ Number 3

Contents:

Indiana NewsWatch	1
Opinion	12
Crops	16
Technology/Machinery	26
Midwest Extra	MX1
Farm Management	33
Livestock	36
Hoosier Lifestyle	42
Hoosier Sprouts	47
Conservation	48
Classified/Marketplace	49
Marketing	59

Contact us:

Editor: Tom J. Bechman
tbechman@farmprogress.com
 P.O. Box 247, Franklin, IN 46131
 Phone: 317-738-0565,
 Fax: 317-738-5441

Contributing Editors:
 Jerilyn Johnson, Alan Newport,
 John Otte, Holly Spangler,
 Arlan Suderman, Lon Tonneson and
 John Vogel

Executive Editor: Frank Holdmeyer

Corporate Editorial Director:
 Willie Vogt

Sales: Jeff Smith, 217-877-1662

Subscription Questions:
 800-441-1410

For additional sales and company information, see the last page of the Marketplace section.

POSTMASTER: Please send address corrections to *Indiana Prairie Farmer*, 191 S. Gary Ave., Carol Stream, IL 60188.

Special ventilation system better for pigs and people

AIRWORKS building and ventilation is a patented system owned by Whiteshire Hamroc. Charlie Lemmon is largely responsible for developing it. Tested over several years, it's a negative-pressure system that directs fresh air downward through slatted flooring. That improves air quality for both pigs and humans, while eliminating drafts.

Mike Lemmon says it results in 50% less animal death loss, plus significant improvements in feed efficiency, increased weaned litter weights, healthier pigs, decreased energy needs and even some odor mitigation. AirWorks buildings and ventilation systems can also be used in retrofit operations.

World-class genetics opens many doors

IN its primary areas of emphasis, Whiteshire Hamroc has developed what it describes as "the most elite Yorkshire, Landrace and Duroc genetics in the world." In partnership with Walso Farms, DeWitte, Neb., it markets breeding stock and semen to producers in most of the 50 states, plus around the world.

"Whiteshire Hamroc's been a perfect fit for us," says Jim Dale, North Manchester. "Their sows make super-good

mothers, and we artificially inseminate to Duroc-based boars." They cut out better, and the meat is better quality, he notes.

Mark Brubaker, an applied geneticist, and Scott Lawrence, a marketing manager, help with advice and troubleshooting, Dale says.

"The things they've brought to our farm have been tremendous, in terms of what we've learned and how they've helped us mover forward," he notes.



SATISFIED CUSTOMER: Jim Dale relies on Whiteshire Hamroc's genetics and expertise.