



# INTERVIEW

**JEFF SUCHON,**  
farm manager, Bushman's Riverside Ranch

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, Badger Common'Tater

**NAME:** Jeff Suchon

**TITLE:** Farm manager

**COMPANY:**

Bushman's Riverside Ranch

**LOCATION:** Crivitz, Wisconsin

**HOMETOWN:** Antigo, Wisconsin

**YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION:** 34

**PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT:**

Wagner Oil, Antigo

**SCHOOLING:** Antigo High School and  
Northcentral Technical College

**ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS:**

St. Mary's Catholic Church Finance  
Council

**FAMILY:** Wife, Sandy, daughters,  
Amber and Danielle, and son, Jared

**HOBBIES:** Shooting clay pigeons,  
spoiling grandkids and restoring farm  
equipment

*A fourth-generation potato farm* Bushman & Associates in Wittenberg, Wisconsin, is currently under the leadership of John E. Bushman and his father, Jonathon "Jon."

It encompasses Bushman's Riverside Ranch, a seed potato farm, in Crivitz, that is overseen by Jeff Suchon, farm manager.

According to John E., the current Bushman & Associates was initially known as Joseph Bushman and Sons, in the 1920s through the '40s, and consisted of 40 cows that were milked by hand and 40 acres of potatoes harvested manually.

Things changed in the 1950s with the advent of Bushman Brothers, which was founded by John Bushman (father of Jon and grandfather of John E.) and his brother, Harry.

Bushman & Associates started in 1973 with Jon and his brother, Robert. "In 1979, Jon and Robert built our current packaging shed in Galloway," John E. says.

"In 1983, a farm in Crivitz was purchased, which is now known as Bushman's Riverside Ranch," he adds. "That same year, Jon and Robert created Bushman Potato Sales, a brokerage for the potatoes they were growing."

Today, Bushman & Associates has expanded to include 550 acres of Silverton and Caribou Russet potatoes and 1,500 acres of rotational crops, which consist of soybeans, sweet corn, peas and field corn.

**Above:** Jeff Suchon (right), farm manager of Bushman's Riverside Ranch in Crivitz, Wisconsin, shares a wagon ride with his son, Jared (left), during the 2019 Rhinelander Field Day. Jeff, who has spent 34 years at Bushman's Riverside Ranch, hopes Jared will be the next farm manager there.

## POTATOES, BEANS & CORN

According to Suchon, Bushman's Riverside Ranch boasts 450 acres of seed potatoes (Caribou Russet and Silverton), 470 acres of green beans and 500 acres of field corn.

"We started with Silvertons when they were first introduced from Colorado as a numbered variety," Jon relates. "We stuck with the variety, as it had been a challenge in the seed business growing mini-tubers and propagating increase out of state."

"After increased demand from commercial fresh growers, the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program got into growing Silvertons on the State Seed Farm," Jon explains.

"Silvertons are now their number one variety by acreage," he says, "and that has helped the growers of Wisconsin with an excellent source of seed potatoes."

On Bushman's Riverside Ranch, Suchon has seven full-time employees working for him, and his wife, Sandy, hires an additional 15-20 seasonal workers during planting and harvest.

"Hopefully, my son, Jared, will be the next manager at this location," he says. "I've enjoyed each minute of working on this farm and raising my family here, and now I enjoy bringing the grandchildren around."

Jeff, Jared and John took turns answering the below interview questions, with the names in parentheses indicating who is responsible for the reply.

### What cover crops do you grow, and in what type of rotation? (Jared)

In Crivitz, we practice a three-year rotation. After green beans are harvested, we plant oats that will grow until fall, which then get sprayed, disced and fumigated so that the ground will be prepared for potatoes the following year.

After potatoes and field corn are harvested, winter wheat is planted.



John E. Bushman takes time for a quick picture while putting fresh market russets into storage in Shantytown, Wisconsin. Bushman & Associates can store 130 acres or 65,000 cwt. (hundredweight) of potatoes at the Shantytown location.

For beans, we kill the wheat and disc. Lastly, for field corn, we practice "no till" and plant into the winter wheat, and then follow with Roundup®.

Has the Wittenberg operation expanded or changed over the

years? Explain. (John) No dramatic changes have been made. We are just slowly trying to produce the best crop possible by upgrading equipment and farming practices.

*continued on pg. 10*

## Water Management & Drainage

- Reduces effect of drought
- Reduces effect of heavy rains and snow
- Improves aeration
- Improves nitrogen content of soil
- Eliminates planting delays
- Lengthens growing season
- Reduces soil erosion
- Lowers production costs
- Reduces phosphorus in streams
- Increases yield
- Uniform field conditions

- Drainage Tiling
- Excavating
- Fecon/Diamond Forestry
- Easement Maintenance

**Call Today! 920-324-2874**

**KARTECHNER**  
BROTHERS LLC.

[www.kartechnerbrothers.com](http://www.kartechnerbrothers.com)





## Interview . . .

continued from pg. 9



**Above:** Though they were hilling through a rainstorm on Bushman's Riverside Ranch, at end of the rainbow was gold—Silverton seed potatoes.

**Top Right:** A field is disced for planting potatoes on Bushman's Riverside Ranch in Crivitz, Wisconsin.

**Right:** A drone view shows how Bushman's Riverside Ranch is set up for digging potatoes. Drone image courtesy of Jared Suchon



**In operation for 36 years, Bushman's Riverside Ranch is the certified seed arm of the business. Why did you decide to get into the certified seed business? (John)** We decided to get into the seed business to try and help produce quality seed to be sold around the state and eastern states.

**Operating a seed farm has unique challenges. Can you give me some examples? Ultimately, how do the two operations differ? (Jeff)** The biggest challenge is cleanliness—making sure every piece of equipment is thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before potatoes touch them.

A way that they differ is the spray program we use compared to Wittenberg. Silvertons aren't affected

by certain diseases, but we still must spray applicable chemicals to keep the seed clean throughout the growing year.

**Do you have to treat Silvertons differently from other varieties? (Jeff)**

We suggest suberizing Silvertons for three or four days prior to planting. We've suberized them up to two months before planting, and it's important to note that we also offer a cutting service.

**The seed farm rounds out your business, I'd guess. If so, in what ways? (Jeff)** It helps us provide a healthy and steady supply of seed potatoes for the main farm.

**Does it make you a more self-sufficient grower? (Jeff)** Yes, we know where our seed is coming from and

the practices used to grow potatoes.

**Who are your customers for the Wittenberg potatoes versus Crivitz? (Jeff)** In Wittenberg, they deal strictly with fresh market and retail. In Crivitz, we deal mainly with our seed growers.

We help them throughout the year with growing questions and any other concerns they raise. The oversize potatoes we produce are brokered out through Bushman Potato Sales.

**How many employees, full and part time, work in Wittenberg? (John)**

In Wittenberg, we employ about 25 full-time people to help in the grading shed and all other aspects of the farm.

continued on pg. 12



**Interview . . .**

*continued from pg. 10*

**John, your dad, Jon, still works in the business, correct? If so, in what capacity?** Yes, he gives advice on the main farm in Galloway as well as the Crivitz seed farm.

**You must be proud of your family heritage. Can you tell me what makes you most proud of the operation you run? (John)** It has been a family operation for many years, and I am happy to see that my children are interested in farming like I was growing up.

**What do you most like about farming in Wittenberg? (John)** The best thing is being able to farm and work some of the same fields that the past generations have done.

**What would be an ideal day at work for you—your favorite part of the job or what you wish you could do all the time? (Jeff)** An ideal day would be any that goes as planned



Jared Suchon of Bushman's Riverside Ranch says that this was not a bad thing to see in the middle of July when he checked the crop.

with no surprises. My favorite part of the job is harvest season. It is then that you finally see the outcome from the long hours put in the previous few months.

**What are your biggest challenges? (Jeff)** Trying to have a day go as planned. Honestly, for any farmer, the biggest challenge for any crop is the weather.



Spuds are harvested on Bushman's Riverside Ranch, a certified seed potato farm in Crivitz, Wisconsin. *Drone images courtesy of Jared Suchon*



**What are your goals for the business, or what do you hope to see happen to the farm in the next five years?**

**(Jeff)** You could say we don't have a five-year plan; it's more of a lifetime plan. The choices we make now are not only to help in the next five years, but also in the lifetime of the farm.

We are hoping to stay on top of the newest technology to keep the farm running smoothly and prosperously. We are constantly trying new and different things to help us farm better than before.

**Do you hope to pass it down to the next generation?**

**(John)** Yes, I am hoping to see the farm passed on to the next generations to come and that they will continue it just as our

*continued on pg. 14*

**Right: Snap beans are picked on Bushman's Riverside Ranch using a pair of Oxbo 2475's. Drone image taken by Jared Suchon**



**HERE TO  
HELP YOU  
GROW**

AgCountry Farm Credit Services provides operating loans, home loans, real estate financing and equipment loans and leases as well as services for tax planning and preparation, farm accounting, appraisal, crop insurance and succession and retirement planning. Contact your local office to learn more.

**Antigo, WI 800-324-5755**

**Marshfield, WI 800-324-5752**

**Stevens Point, WI 800-324-5754**

**Wausau, WI 800-324-5751**



**AgCountry<sup>®</sup>**  
**Farm Credit Services**

www.agcountry.com • Follow us on social media  





**Interview . . .**

*continued from pg. 13*



Fresh russet potatoes go into storage in Shantytown, Wisconsin, not far from the main Bushman & Associates farm in Galloway.

ancestors would have wanted to see it.

**Jeff, you had mentioned hoping your son would someday manage the seed farm. Is this a goal, and if so, why?** Yes, Jared has been around the farm all his life. He has an advantage over me because he has been able to learn about farming at a young age versus me starting when I was 21.

You can catch on to a lot more when you grow up in the business. **BCT**

**Below:** When harvest is in full swing, they work straight through the night at Bushman's Riverside Ranch in Crivitz, Wisconsin. *Drone image by Jared Suchon*



The current Bushman & Associates was initially known as Joseph Bushman and Sons, in the 1920s through the '40s, and consisted of 40 cows that were milked by hand and 40 acres of potatoes harvested manually. You know you're in high cotton when you have your own refrigerator railcar.

