



THE WORLD-FAMOUS BUDWEISER CLYDESDALES: A SPECIAL BREED IS BORN

A look into the rich, colorful history of the special Clydesdale breed begins in the early 19th century, along the River Clyde in Lanarkshire, Scotland.

The region, located in a valley, or “dale,” was known for its rich soil and abundant crops. The farmers were in great need of strong horses for hauling, plowing and carting all the necessary farm equipment and workers.

One of the Dukes of Hamilton, a local, wealthy landowner, imported to the region six Great Flemish Horses, a breed that already had been regularly shipped to Scotland to be used as war horses and for farm work.

The Duke made his six prize horses available for breeding to local mares, and the Clydesdale breed was born.

People from outside Lanarkshire began to refer to the big, powerful horses as “the Clydesman’s horse,” a name that eventually became “Clydesdale.”

The early Clydesdales quickly garnered attention as a breed more powerful than any breed available before. The horses were said to be capable of pulling loads of more than a ton at a walking speed of five miles an hour.

It was the breed's hauling power and confident style that attracted North Americans to the Clydesdale breed. In fact, in the early days of brewing, it was said that a brewer's success was directly related to how far his draft horses could pull a load in one day.

Today's Budweiser Clydesdales are even bigger than their Scottish ancestors. To qualify for the world-famous eight-horse hitch, a Budweiser Clydesdale must meet certain requirements. Size, color and disposition are the important considerations.

Standing at 18 hands high (about 6 feet) at the shoulder when fully mature, Budweiser Clydesdales weigh approximately 2,000 pounds. They must be geldings, bay in color, have four white stockings and a blaze of white on the face, as well as a black mane and tail. A gentle temperament also is important, as hitch horses meet millions of people each year.

In two daily meals, a Budweiser Clydesdale hitch horse will consume 20 to 25 quarts of feed, 50 to 60 pounds of hay and up to 30 gallons of water.

Once a Clydesdale is selected to be among the chosen few to travel with one of the company's traveling eight-horse hitches, he can expect to spend many of his days on the road, performing at hundreds of events each year.

Budweiser Clydesdales

Page Three

The Clydesdales travel in a style befitting a king. In order to provide rest for each of the eight “first-string” horses, the Clydesdale hitch teams always travel with a total of 10 “gentle giants.”

The traveling caravan also includes three 50-foot tractor-trailers, custom-built for the horses with rubber flooring, air suspension and vent fans to ease the rigors of hours on the road.

Two tractor-trailers carry the Clydesdales and a third takes everything else – the historic beer wagon, harnesses and other gear.

Performance days for a Budweiser Clydesdale are a combination of excitement and perfection. While the horses are groomed daily, special attention is given to their appearance on performance days.

The expert grooms who travel with the horses spend about five hours washing and grooming the horses, polishing the harnesses, braiding red and white ribbons into the manes and inserting red and white bows into the tails. The entire harnessing process takes an additional 45 minutes.

Once the harnessing is completed, Clydesdales are individually hitched to the red, white and gold 1903 Studebaker-built beer wagon. The wheel horses, those closest to the wagon (and generally the strongest), are hitched up first.

Once all eight horses are hitched to the wagon, the driver begins to adjust the reins. Driving the 12 tons of wagon and horses requires strength, experience and stamina. The 40 pounds of reins the driver holds, plus the tension on the reins, equals 75 pounds. During long parades, the driver and the assistant often alternate the reins in order to remain fresh and alert.