



CLYDESDALE FACT SHEET

THE CLYDESDALE BREED

Farmers living in the 19th century along the banks of the River Clyde in Lanarkshire, Scotland, bred the Great Flemish Horse, the forerunner of the Clydesdale. These first draft horses pulled loads of more than 1 ton at a walking speed of five miles per hour. Soon their reputation spread beyond the Scottish borders.

In the mid-1800s, Canadians of Scottish descent brought the first Clydesdales to the United States where the draft horses resumed their existence on farms. Today, the Clydesdales are used primarily for breeding and show.

THE BUDWEISER CLYDESDALES

The Budweiser Clydesdales have been the symbol of Anheuser-Busch for more than 75 years. They were formally introduced on April 7, 1933, to celebrate the repeal of Prohibition for beer. August A. Busch Jr. and Adolphus Busch III presented a hitch of horses to their father to celebrate the day. To their father's delight, the hitch thundered down Pestalozzi Street carrying the first case of post-Prohibition beer from the St. Louis brewery.

HITCH REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for one of the four traveling hitches, a Budweiser Clydesdale must be a gelding at least four years of age. He must stand 72 inches, or 6 feet, at the shoulder when fully mature; weigh between 1,800 and 2,300 pounds; be bay in color; and have four white stocking feet, a blaze of white on the face and a black mane and tail.

FEED

Each hitch horse will consume as much as 20 to 25 quarts of whole grains, minerals and vitamins, 50 to 60 pounds of hay and 30 gallons of water per day.

HITCH LOCATIONS

Traveling Budweiser Clydesdale hitches are based in St. Louis, Mo.; Boonville, Mo., and Merrimack, N.H. The Budweiser Clydesdales can be viewed at the Anheuser-Busch breweries in St. Louis, Merrimack, and Ft. Collins, Colo., and at Warm Springs Ranch in Boonville and Grant's Farm in St. Louis.

CLYDESDALE OPERATIONS

Based in St. Louis, Clydesdale Operations is responsible for maintaining and scheduling the traveling hitches. Events are typically sponsored in part by the local Anheuser-Busch wholesalers and thousands of requests for the “gentle giants” are received each year. Each request is evaluated on the type of event, dates, and history of appearances in that particular area.

STABLES

The official home of the Budweiser Clydesdales is an ornate brick and stained-glass stable built in 1885 on the historic 100-acre Anheuser-Busch brewery complex in St. Louis. The building is one of three located on the brewery grounds that are registered as historic landmarks by the federal government.

HANDLERS

Expert groomers travel on the road with the hitch. They are on the road at least 10 months every year. When necessary, one handler has night duty to provide round-the-clock care for the horses, ensuring their safety and comfort.

TRANSPORT

Ten horses, the famous red, white and gold beer wagon and other essential equipment are transported in three 50-foot tractor-trailers. Cameras in the trailers (with monitors in the cabs) enable the drivers to keep a watchful eye on their precious cargo during transport. The team stops each night at local stables so the “gentle giants” can rest. Air-cushion suspension and thick rubber flooring in the trailers ease the rigors of traveling.

DRIVERS

Driving the 12 tons of wagon and horses requires quite a bit of strength and skill. The 40 pounds of reins the driver holds, plus the tension of the reins, equals 75 pounds. All hitch drivers are put through a rigorous training period before they are given the reins.

HARNESS

Each harness and collar weighs approximately 130 pounds. The harness is handcrafted from brass and leather. Pure linen thread is used for the stitching. The harness is made to fit any horse, but the collars come in different sizes and must be individually fitted like a suit of clothes.

NAMES

Duke, Captain, Mark and Bud are just a few of the names given to the Budweiser Clydesdales. Names are kept short to make it easier for the driver to give commands to the horses during a performance.

HORSESHOES

Clydesdale horseshoes measure more than 20 inches from end to end and weigh about 5 pounds – more than twice as long and five times as heavy as the shoe worn by a riding horse. A horse's hoof is made of a nerveless, horn-like substance similar to the human fingernail, so being fitted for shoes affects the animal no more than a manicure affects people.

WAGON

Turn-of-the-century beer wagons have been meticulously restored and are kept in excellent repair. The wagons are equipped with two braking systems: a hydraulic pedal device that slows the vehicle for turns and descents down hills, and a hand brake that locks the rear wheels when the wagon is at a halt.

DALMATIANS

Dalmatians have traveled with the Clydesdale hitch since the 1950s. The Dalmatian breed long has been associated with horses and valued for their speed, endurance and dependable nature. Dalmatians were known as coach dogs, because they ran between the wheels of coaches or carriages and were companions to the horses. Today, the Dalmatians are perched atop the wagon, seated next to the driver.

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