



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 needed 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 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 heavier than a ton at a walking speed of five miles per hour. It was the breed’s hauling power and confident style that attracted the interest of North Americans. 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.

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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 size, color, and disposition requirements.

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 is a very important characteristic, as hitch horses meet millions of people each year.

In two daily meals, a Budweiser Clydesdale hitch horse will consume 1 to 6 pounds 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.

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 includes three 60-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 carries everything else including the iconic beer wagon and a full set of hand-crafted, patent leather, and solid brass harness.

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 approximately five hours washing and grooming the horses, polishing the harness, braiding red and white ribbons into the manes, and inserting red and white bows into the tails.

Harnessing all eight horses is a process that usually takes 45 minutes. The wheel team, the horses closest to the wagon (and generally the strongest), is harnessed first proceeded by the body, swing, and lead teams. After each Clydesdale is harnessed, they are individually hitched to the red, white, and gold 1903 Studebaker-built beer wagon. Finally, after all eight horses are hitched to the wagon the driver adjusts the lines. Driving the 12 tons of wagon and horses requires strength, experience, and stamina. The 40 pounds of lines the driver holds, plus the tension, equals over 75 pounds. During long parades, the driver, and the assistant often alternate driving to remain fresh and alert.

THE BUDWEISER CLYDESDALES – MARVELS OF MAIN STREET

The scene has become a familiar one throughout the years. No parade is complete without the world-famous Budweiser Clydesdales pulling a red, white, and gold beer wagon down a Main Street that comes to life with the cheers and applause of onlookers.

It was in 1933, shortly after the signing of the Cullen-Harrison Act effectively ending national Prohibition for beer when the Budweiser Clydesdales became a part of Anheuser-Busch. August A. Busch Jr. and Adolphus Busch III decided to present a hitch of the mighty horses to their father to commemorate the first bottle of post-Prohibition beer brewed in St. Louis.

Mr. Busch told his father that he bought a new car and asked him to step outside and look at the new vehicle. But instead of a Model “T,” Mr. Busch’s father gazed upon a Clydesdale hitch pulling a red, white, and gold beer wagon. The Budweiser Clydesdales were formally introduced to the nation on April 7, 1933, in St. Louis, Missouri.

Realizing the advertising and promotional potential of a horse-drawn beer wagon, the company sent a second team by rail to New York City, where it picked up a case of Budweiser

beer at New Jersey's Newark Airport. The beer was later presented to Al Smith, former governor of New York and an instrumental force in the repeal of Prohibition. From there, the Clydesdales continued a tour of New England and the Middle Atlantic States. The hitch even delivered a case of beer to President Franklin D. Roosevelt at The White House.

Before truck transportation was introduced in 1940, the horses, wagons, harness, and equipment traveled by train for long-hauls and then by local trucks to wherever the horses were stabled. Now, the horses travel in style aboard custom tractor-trailers.

The Clydesdales travel to hundreds of appearances each year throughout North America and occasionally overseas to meet millions of cheering crowds and happy faces. Whether they're seen at a parade in Iowa or a rodeo in Texas, the Clydesdales are always a crowd pleaser. The Clydesdale hitches travel thousands of miles each year, and with each mile they cover, so continues the Anheuser-Busch tradition.

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