



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 one 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 almost 90 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 Anheuser-Busch brewery in St. Louis, Missouri.

HITCH REQUIREMENTS

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

FEED

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

HITCH

The Budweiser Clydesdales have three traveling teams: St. Louis Hitch, East Coast, and West Coast Hitch. The St. Louis Hitch can be viewed at the Anheuser-Busch breweries in St. Louis, Missouri. Our breeding and training program is located at Warm Springs Ranch, the 300-plus acre farm located near Boonville, Missouri.

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CLYDESDALE OPERATIONS

Based in St. Louis, Missouri, Clydesdale Operations is responsible for maintaining and scheduling the traveling hitches. Thousands of requests for the “gentle giants” are received each year. Events are typically requested and sponsored in part by the local Anheuser-Busch wholesaler. Each request is evaluated on the type of event, dates, and history of appearances in that 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 grooms travel on the road with the hitch. They are on the road at least 10 months every year.

TRANSPORT

Ten horses, the famous red, white, and gold beer wagon and other essential equipment are transported in three 65-foot tractor-trailers. Cameras mounted in the trailers are connected to monitors in the cabs that 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-cushioned suspension and thick rubber flooring in the trailers ease the rigors of traveling.

DRIVERS

Driving the combined 12 tons of wagon and horses requires expert skill and physical strength. The 40 pounds of lines held by the driver plus the tension of the horses pulling creates a weight of over 75 pounds. Hitch drivers endure a lengthy training process before they assume the prestigious role of “Budweiser Clydesdale Hitch Driver.”

HARNESS

Each harness and collar weighs approximately 130 pounds. The harness is handcrafted with solid brass, patent leather, and stitched with pure linen thread. The harness is made to fit any Clydesdale; however, collars come in various sizes and must be individually fitted to the Clydesdale like a finely tailored suit.

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 which is more than twice as long and five times as heavy as the shoe worn by a light 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.

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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 downhill descents, and a handbrake 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, proudly seated next to the driver.

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