

By [Eventing Nation](#) on Jul 8, 2019 11:00 am

Five Top 10 Eventers are Hay Steamers

Pan Am Games-bound & top-10 ranked eventers rely on Haygain USA for maximizing horse health, well-being and performance.

Five of the U.S. current top 10-ranked eventers count on Haygain steamed hay for their horses. Initially, most sought it for different reasons: poor appetite, ulcers and being “allergic to America” among them. Which is kind of funny because these are all secondary benefits.

Steamed hay was developed 10 years ago in conjunction with the Royal Agricultural University in Cirencester, England. The primary goal was improving respiratory health, which is considered the number-one performance limiter in otherwise healthy horses.

Hay should always comprise the majority of the horse’s diet, but the fact is that even the best quality, most expensive hay is loaded with breathable irritants: dust, mold, fungi and bacteria. These particles infiltrate the airways and lungs, which are one of the most vulnerable and delicate systems in the horse’s body. Unlike muscles, the thin lining of the respiratory system, through which oxygen is absorbed by the body, can’t be made stronger.

Damage can’t be repaired, only managed, which steamed hay is a huge help with. Ideally, Haygain is deployed as a preventative measure. In healthy horses, the clean, pure hay steaming produces enables better breathing that equals better health and performance.



Liz Halliday-Sharp’s 5 partner Deniro Z eats steamed hay to prevent a recurrence of ulcers.*

Eventers Lead The Way

Globally, eventing riders lead the way in embracing hay steaming. Their three-phase sport involves galloping at speed, two to three miles, over

large, permanent obstacles that don't budge when hit. Feeding clean hay, no matter where they are in the world, ensures the easy breathing essential to that level of exertion.

Recently selected to represent the U.S. at the Pan American Games in August, Tamie Smith turned to Haygain Steamed Hay to help improve her 5* horse Wembley's appetite. The big horse was a picky eater and needed to eat more to have the energy required.

Wembley's appetite improved immediately on steamed hay and Tamie quickly recognized its wider benefits and put all her horses on it. "All you have to do is look at steamed hay versus dusty, dirty, dry hay, and it's a no brainer," Tamie says. "You can see how much cleaner it is and we just feel it's overall better for the horses' respiratory systems."

One of Tamie's other horses is Mai Baum, her Pan Am Games partner, and the stakes regarding his health could not be higher right now. The U.S. team must earn Pan Am gold or silver to assure the States a place at the 2020 Olympics.

Tamie's Pan Am teammate as the traveling reserve, Liz Halliday-Sharp, sought Haygain to help one of her top horses, Deniro Z, recover from an ulcer and prevent a recurrence. For nutritional reasons, he needed to switch from haylage to regular hay, yet still get the water content found in haylage. Since switching to steamed hay, Deniro is back on track as a top international horse.

"Deniro prefers it to anything else," Liz reports. Like Tamie, Liz is now steaming hay for her other horses. "I like the idea that it's dust and bug free and they all seem to love it." Her barn staff is happily on board, too. "We had been soaking our hay and that was a real nightmare. They love not having to do that anymore and the horses are happy and healthy."

Allergic To America

Fellow top-10 ranked rider, Olympian and WEG team member Lauren Kieffer acknowledges that she didn't realize all of steamed hay's benefits "until we had a horse that really needed it." That horse was a recent import who arrived from Europe struggling with allergies. His breathing was frequently wheezy, and he was prone to coughing at rest and while galloping. "He was basically allergic to America," Lauren comments.

While looking for ways to alleviate the horse's allergy symptoms, Lauren's head groom Sally Robertson suggested Haygain. The allergy-affected import was a familiar story for Sally, whose belief in steamed hay dates back to her days in England working for Clark Montgomery. At the time, the American Olympic eventer was based there and some of the horses he brought with him were suffering allergy-like symptoms, probably due to different grasses and other environmental factors. The science-backed benefits of feeding clean hay made immediate sense to Sally and seeing Clark's horses respond positively to the new diet made her a believer.

Back in the States working for another top rider, Sally saw another imported horse's persistent cough disappear after just a few feedings of steamed hay. "We just couldn't get rid of that cough. We'd wet the grain, we'd soak the hay...nothing mattered. But after a few feedings of steamed hay, that cough was gone. It was crazy!"

Sally brought her belief in Haygain when she signed on as head groom for Lauren. Lauren rides for Jacqueline Mars' Mars Equestrian and is a top candidate for another Olympic outing.

Buck Davidson is another top-10 ranked Haygainer. One of the first Americans to embrace hay steaming, Buck explains that "it was huge for Reggie," his 2010 World Equestrian Games partner, aka Ballynoe Castle Rm.

Maintaining Peak Horse Health

Another Olympian, WEG team member and top-10 ranked rider, Will Coleman, adopted steamed hay for his horse's overall health and improved performance. "You focus on your short-term plans because that's what will take you to your long-term goals," he explains. Maintaining peak horse

health is the most important aspect of those short-term goals. Steamed hay, “is one of those small things that make a big difference.”

Although he’s an Olympian, Will has a reason for choosing steamed hay that gives him common ground with all horse owners: a desire to provide the best for their horses’ health, well-being and performance.

(Eventing Nation is a U.S.-based international equestrian website focused on the Olympic discipline of eventing. 1.2 million readers follow its in-depth event coverage and behind-the-scenes reporting.)