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A new way to take care of hay

Former Seneca Army Depot will be site of operation that cuts, dries, bales local farmers' hay.

NEIL CHAFFIE • MARCH 30, 2008

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Curing a field of hay takes four and a half to five low-humidity and rain-free days.

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Jeff Warren and John Davie say they can do it in a lot less time and put more money into a grower's pocket.

Top Quality Hay Processors LLC, a new company, has a patent pending process that "changes the way traditional haying is done."

In the process, Warren said, his company takes the weather factor out of the equation while increasing marketable tonnage by 50 percent.

The goal is a high-quality bale of hay with a low moisture content, a high level of protein, consistency in flakes and free of mold and dust.

Just what livestock owners are in search of, Warren said.

Currently setting up shop at the former Seneca Army Depot in Romulus, Warren, a Penn Yan resident, intends his company to be in operation in the months just ahead.

Explaining his project for the Romulus Planning Board, Warren said Top Quality will turn to area farmers for standing hay within a 20-mile radius of the Romulus operation.

The distance is important, he said, because hay needs to be on the dryer within six hours after it is cut.

Top Quality prides itself on the fact that cut hay never strikes the ground, he said.

From a John Deere cutter, hay is loaded into a light-weight vehicle and trucked out of the field to a waiting tractor-trailer.

The cutting and loading, Warren said, bypasses the usual procedure of allowing cut hay to fall onto the ground and having to wait several days for it to dry out or cure.

Following Top Quality's plan, Warren said, a farmer can expect top money for his hay and not have to worry about it lying on the ground subject to the whims of Mother Nature.

Weighed and recorded at the plant, the crop is placed aboard a conveyor belt and carried to a detangler.

From there, it is loaded on another belt and moves into a radiant heating process where fans dry the hay and may even add a bit of moisture.

Next comes the baling area and storage of 40-pound bales while awaiting shipment by either trucks or rail.

By-products will include bottled water, alfalfa tea, protein drinks and the bagging of leaf loss or chaff as



Jeff Warren

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food for rabbits and hamsters.

Top Quality is working with Cornell University on other by-products as well.

Warren and Davie, a Geneva farmer, had considered opening their first plant on Pre-Emption Road near Geneva, but state Sen. Michael F. Nozzolio, R-54th District, suggested the two men and their five partners should give the closed Army depot some consideration with its vast warehouse space and rail lines.

On Monday, Warren, members of his family and Davie looked on as Nozzolio turned over an \$856,000 state check to be used for equipment to allow Top Quality to boost its output from a planned 150 tons of hay this year to 3,000 tons.

By its third year of operation, Nozzolio said, Top Quality expects to be turning out 18,000 tons of hay.

The company notes in its Web site at www.tqhp.com that it has more than 42 years of farming experience and more than \$1.4 million invested in what it hopes will become the model for other states to follow.

If things go according to plan, Top Quality Hay Processors wants to have various plants about 100 miles apart.

One is to be built on Pre-Emption Road near Geneva and another near Bloomfield, N.Y.

For more information, contact Warren at (315) 694-2527 or e-mail laketolakehay@aol.com.

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