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Patented drying process produces high-quality hay

Company to open plant at Seneca Army Depot with share of \$2.5M grant.

DIANA LOUISE CARTER • STAFF WRITER • MARCH 2, 2008

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You might call it designer hay.

The hay produced by Top Quality Hay Processors of Geneva will have a brand name, perhaps Equine Supreme.

But first, its new plant in Romulus, Seneca County, has to get up and running.

The start-up's aim is to produce a higher-quality hay for horses and their finicky owners by delicately drying the greenery in a processing plant instead of turning the process over to the vagaries of upstate New York [weather](#). Production will begin in May, said principal Jeff Warren of Penn Yan, Yates County.

The hay processor is one of two companies headquartered at the Cornell Agriculture Food Technology Park in Geneva that will share a \$2.5

million grant from the state's Restore NY [fund](#).

The money will help the hay processors, along with Seneca BioEnergy, a soybean-crushing [company](#), move from the research and development stage in Ontario County to full production in military warehouse buildings they'll rehab and lease at the Seneca Army Depot.

Warren, who developed the drying process, says he and his five partners were planning to build a plant on Pre-emption Road in Geneva, on the farm of one of the partners, John Davie. A slab for the building had already been poured when state Sen. Michael Nozzolio suggested the company consider the former depot for its [start-up](#) plant, Warren said.

In addition to [financial](#) incentives available for projects at the depot, the hay folks found they could keep their initial costs low by partnering with one of their neighbors at the Food Tech incubator.

"Because both of them were taking offices here, they were introduced to each other and they found synergies on how they could work together," said Steve Isaacs, executive director of the food-tech park.

"We have so many things in common," said Warren. "We both need rail, we both need truck scales. What we're hoping to do is talk with the local farms and have the crops in a rotation with them."

Farmers who supply hay to the hay processors might alternate their hay crops with soybeans for Seneca BioEnergy.

Using a patented process, Top Quality Hay untangles and dries freshly harvested hay with natural gas.

The bales are ready in four hours, instead of the usual four to five days.

Because the hay is handled less and dried more uniformly than it can be outdoors, it stays more intact, remains dust- and mold-free and suffers no weather damage, the company says.

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Warren said Top Quality Hay will return to the Ontario County site to build a second plant after the Seneca County plant is established, and eventually build a third site, in Bloomfield, which will be owned by farmers. The plants will be able to custom-blend hay products and produce saleable by-products from rabbit food to bottled waters and teas.

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