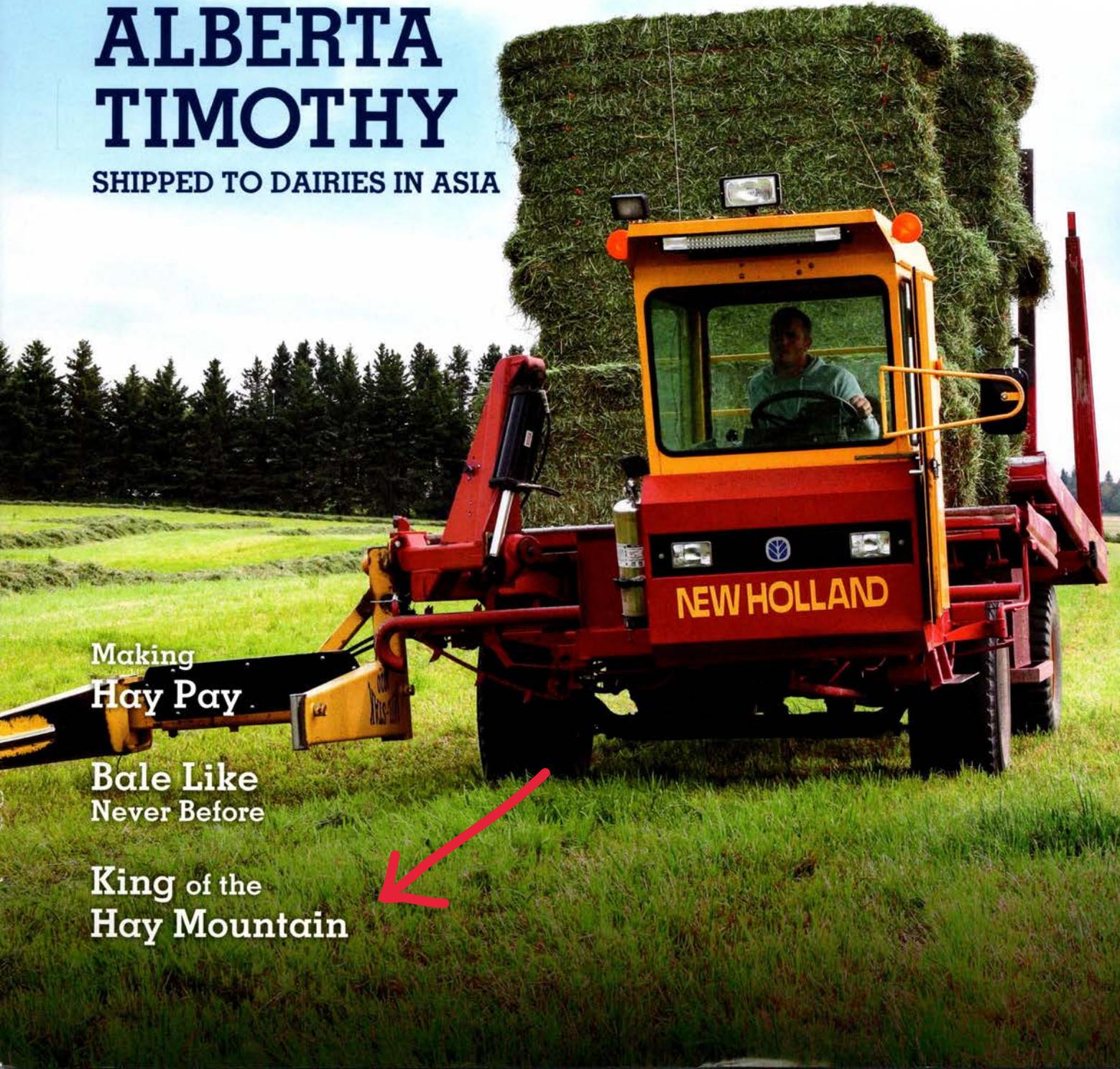


New Holland **NEWS**

SUMMER 2021

ALBERTA TIMOTHY

SHIPPED TO DAIRIES IN ASIA



Making
Hay Pay

Bale Like
Never Before

King of the
Hay Mountain



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KING of the HAY MOUNTAIN



Former office equipment salesman builds a hay empire in hills of New York State.

On a sweaty late-summer day, in a roller coaster hay field in eastern New York State, Ed Potrzeba, Jr., and his crew are swarming the acreage like a plague of locusts. Two New Holland BigBalers roar up and down the windrows, spewing 3'x3' squares. New Holland tractors drop their rakes and tedders, attach bale spears and follow in quick pursuit, collecting the bounty and building neat stacks at the field's edge. A couple of pickups towing flat trailers line up to receive the goods, then promptly depart to spin through town and deliver them to the hay storage barns.

All the while, Ed works his phone like a bookie taking bets on the next horse race: directing, re-directing, dishing out mechanic's advice, answering customer inquiries about the price of second and third cuttings. And smiling. This man is King of the Hay Mountain, and he couldn't be happier.

The road to this success took some unique turns, however. Having grown up in and taken over the family office equipment business, he learned the critical importance of customer service and satisfaction. It's the primary business tenet he brings to work every day. "I want to be easy to reach," he

says, "and we stand behind our hay 100 percent. If you're unhappy with one of the bales you buy from me, set it out and we'll replace it the next time we deliver."

Let's go buy a farm

In 2015 Ed cut back his involvement in the office equipment business, which had grown to a staff of 35. He and wife, Heather, bought some farmland where they built a home, plus a stable and arena that Heather has developed into a semi-private equine facility. And Ed started making hay. First, for the horses and a dozen Red Angus beefers. The following year he bought the neighbor's farm for additional hay land. With it came 150 head of Black Angus and a custom meat business that served restaurants, farm markets, and provided home delivery.

"I knew zero (about farming) when we started," recalls Ed. "We had about 150 tillable acres, a hay mow in an old barn on the place, and an existing coverall." Utilizing social media, Ed started to attract more potential customers, some a fair distance away from his Earlville base of operations. So, in 2016 he started offering to deliver hay, borrowing trucks or hiring independents to get the job done.

As the hay business began to take off, he sold the meat business to a young couple, but kept a small herd of 46 Red Angus that eagerly consumes any hay that's a little lower in quality. In 2017 he built a 60'x 140' hay storage barn. Two years later he bought his first tractor trailer. In 2020 Ed further concentrated his attention and efforts on the hay business by selling off the office equipment business.

It didn't take him long to hook up with the local Growmark FS team for crop consulting and application services. This allows him to zero in on production and marketing — his preferred skill sets. He's a people guy;



We stand behind our hay 100%.



Ed Potrzeba, Jr., spends a lot of time on his cellphone, handling dozens of hay inquiries a day.



outgoing, fun-loving, a natural-born salesman. And with a four- to eight-person crew sporting team t-shirts and colorful nicknames like “Foxy,” “Luke the Duke,” and “Pinhead,” NY Hay Sales maintains an upbeat attitude despite the long, demanding days. Sons Eddie III and Charlie are deeply involved in the business, contributing youthful energy, mechanical and technological smarts, as well as devotion to the cause. Also on call are Wayne and Martin Furner, Neil Trueworthy, Richard Fox, and Luke Nassimos.

Ed says the high-tech features on the New Holland balers give NY Hay an edge: moisture testers and automatic preservative systems, automatic red paint lines that mark “too wet” sections of bales and scales that quantify production, allowing pricing by the ton.



Ed Potrzeba, Jr., Neil Trueworthy, Wayne Furner and Luke Nassimos. (Inset photos) Ed's sons, Eddie III and Charlie.

Ed is also testing GPS functionality on the New Holland equipment. “If we can identify yield differences in the fields, and apply appropriate nutrients, it might pay for itself,” he explains. In 2019 they demo’d some New Holland MegaCutter™ triple mowers and bought them in 2020. “Seasons are short, and weather is our biggest challenge,” he says. “Our goal is to keep trying to cover

more acreage in less time.” Currently NY Hay Sales works 1,200 acres, 900 of those are rented.

Besides the satisfaction guarantee Ed promises his customers, he also offers an option for creative financing. Most of his buyers are horse owners whose businesses turn on monthly boarding and lesson fees. So rather than require

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Bales are retrieved and stacked at the edge of the fields for pick up.



full payment of a load of hay, he delivers hay as needed, but bills monthly, charging very little interest.

He works on educating customers when he can, too. For example, people expect him to price by the bale, but he tells them he prices by the ton. That way, they know exactly how much hay they're getting for their dollar. "It's like buying gas by the gallon," he says. Same goes for customers who don't want him to spray their hay crop. "I let them know up front that without spray, you're going to have weeds."

Another challenge is pricing to take into account miles covered for delivery. NY Hay Sales currently owns three tractor trailers and travels up and down the

East Coast, with occasional trips to the Midwest. When drawing up price quotes Ed calculates the delivery rate by asking for the delivery zip code, then factors in his per mile costs (fuel, manpower, equipment). It takes a surprising number of inquiries to actually land a sale, he says. "There are a lot of window lookers; I've had 21 requests just this morning. Only about one percent turn out to be actual buyers."

Hay cave

With an eye to continued business growth, last year Ed built a 64' x 288' barn for hay storage and designed it with multiple access doors along the long side. Eighteen bays allow

organized stacking of different cuttings and qualities, and pallets placed on the asphalt floor promote good air circulation around the stacks. Though all the hay is baled into large squares in the summer, some winters Potrzeba has re-baled a portion of the stored hay into small squares.

A camp in the Adirondacks is the Potrzebas' favorite get-away for fishing, swimming, and snowmobiling. One year they took a family vacation after hay season to drive across much of the western U.S. "We drooled at the size of the hay fields out there, most of them irrigated so they don't have the weather issues we face," Ed says. "But in the end, we understand that every hay operation, no matter the region, has its own set of challenges." 🌿

A new barn for hay storage was designed with 18 bays to organize hay of different cuttings and quality.



WHO: NY Hay Sales

WHERE: Earlville, New York

NEW HOLLAND EQUIPMENT: T8, T7, T6, T5 & PowerStar™ Series tractors; BigBalers, MegaCutter™ triple mower, tracked & wheeled skid steers

DEALER: Clinton Tractor, Clinton, New York